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In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

June 24, 2002

Nightmares of Reason

By Salim Muwakkil

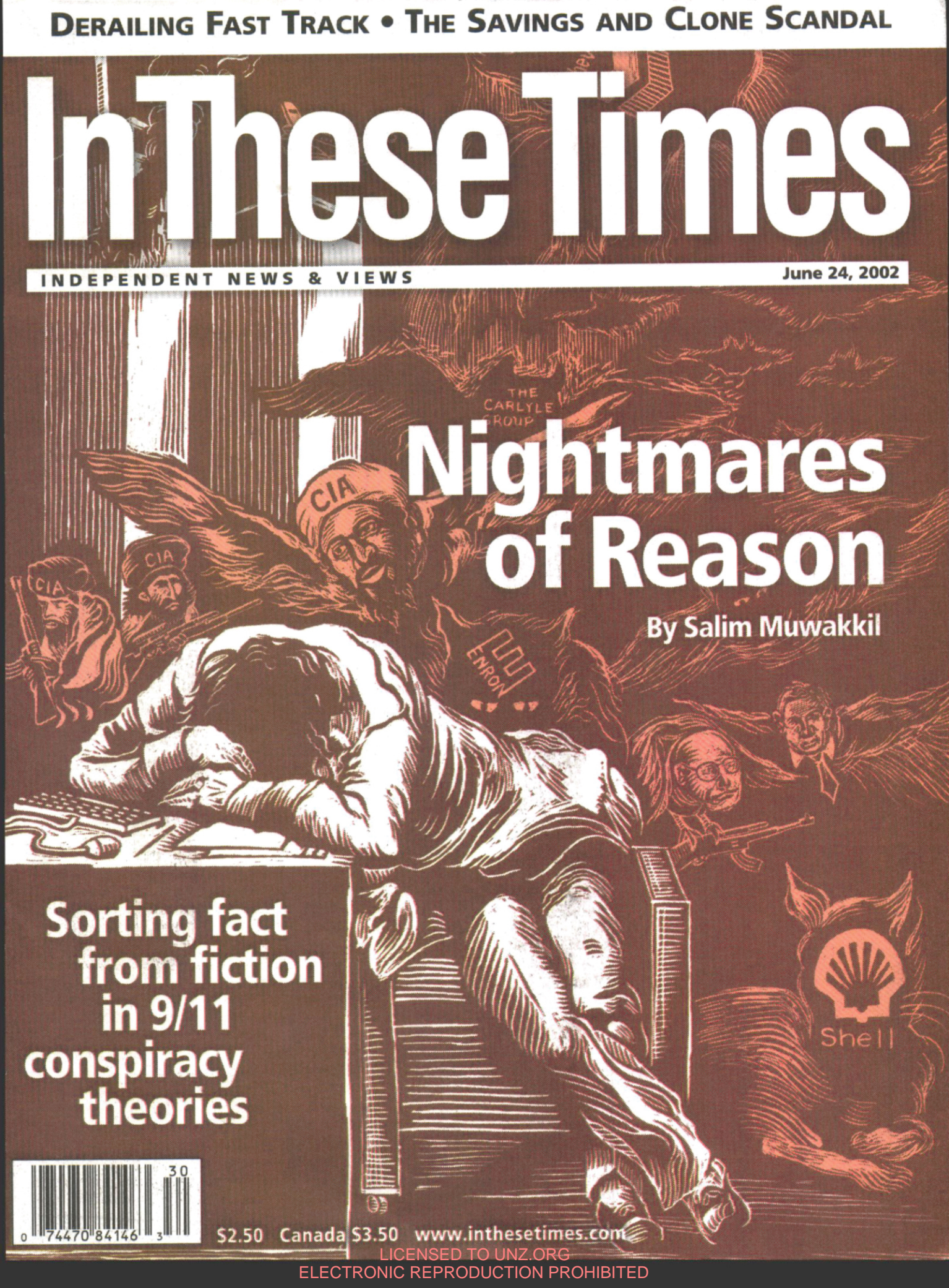
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Editorial

Fear and Loathing

As warnings from the Bush administration of an imminent terrorist attack spark fear in Americans, it behooves us to consider the following chronology:

JULY 1996 A Pakistani terrorist with ties to Osama bin Laden tells the CIA and FBI that he planned to be trained as a pilot in the United States and fly an explosive-packed plane into CIA headquarters at Langley, Virginia.

SEPTEMBER 1999 The CIA warns: "Suicide bombers belonging to al-Qaeda's Martyrdom Battalion could crash land an aircraft packed with high explosives (C-4 and semtex) into the Pentagon, the headquarters of the CIA or the White House."

JANUARY 31, 2001 Former Sen. Gary Hart, co-chairman of a bipartisan terrorism commission, warns that America is vulnerable to "a weapon of mass destruction in a high-rise building."

JUNE 22 CIA Director George Tenet is reportedly "nearly frantic" about the possibility of an al-Qaeda attack.

JUNE 22-AUGUST 16 The Federal Aviation Administration issues five warnings to airlines about impending threats.

JUNE 28 Condoleezza Rice is warned in an intelligence report: "It is highly likely that a significant al-Qaeda attack is in the near future, within several weeks."

JULY 5 White House officials are informed that "something really spectacular is going to happen here, and it is going to happen soon."

JULY 10 In a memo to Washington that mentions bin Laden, an FBI special agent in Phoenix warns that a large number of Arabs are seeking flight training in the United States.

AUGUST 6 Bush, taking one of the longest vacations in presidential history, is warned that bin Laden followers might try to hijack U.S. planes. The memo is titled, "Bin Laden Determined to Strike the United States in U.S."

AUGUST 16 Zacarias Moussaoui is detained in Minnesota after his flight school alerts authorities to his lack of interest in learning how to land a plane.

SEPTEMBER 6 Hart meets with Rice and urges the White House to move faster in response to terrorist threats.

SEPTEMBER 11 Al-Qaeda attacks kill more than 3,000 people in New York and Washington.

DECEMBER 20 The *Washington Post* publishes

an interview with the president, in which Bush explains: "I knew [bin Laden] was a menace, and I knew he was a problem, but I didn't feel the sense of urgency."

MAY Press reports reveal that the administration had prior warnings of attack.

MAY 19 Amid calls for a congressional investigation, Vice President Dick Cheney says the administration will not release the text of the warning Bush received on August 6. He tells America that another terrorist strike is "almost certain."

MAY 21 Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle (D-South Dakota) calls for an independent congressional inquiry. House Majority Whip Tom DeLay (R-Texas) says such an inquiry "during a time of war is ill conceived and frankly irresponsible." Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld warns that terrorists will "inevitably" obtain weapons of mass destruction. Homeland Security Director Tom Ridge says that more terrorists attacks are "not a question of if, but a question of when." Bush explains, "Al-Qaeda still exists, they still hate America and any other country which loves freedom, and they want to hurt us. They're nothing but a bunch of cold-blooded killers."

MAY 23 Bush rejects calls for an independent congressional inquiry.

Are Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, Ridge, et al., responding to new evidence of a real threat? Or are they stoking public anxieties for their own strategic ends?

For the past seven months, with the nation united in a war against "evil-doers," the administration has avoided scrutiny of how it is waging that war and, by extension, its domestic policy agenda.

Cultivating public fear of sinister outside forces bent on destroying American life and liberty became a time-honored tool during the Cold War. It helps explain how Americans were initially sold on going to war in Vietnam—a war that killed 58,000 Americans and an estimated 1.5 million Vietnamese.

September 11 proved a threat exists. But what transpired in Washington prior to that dark day raises serious questions about the Bush administration's competence. Yes, additional terrorist attacks may loom. Impending danger, however, is not a reason to avoid a complete inquiry. Congress needs to order a full investigation now. America can't let this happen again.

—Joel Bleifuss

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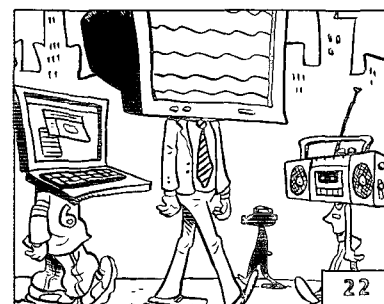
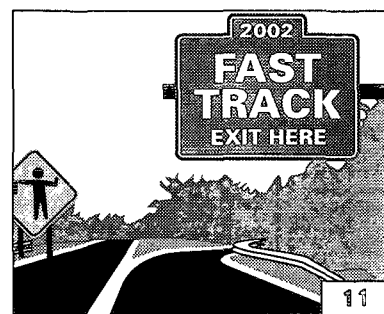
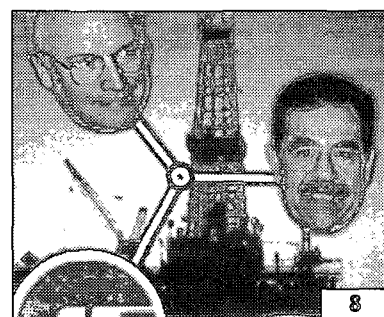
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Israel and Palestine

It was enlightening to see through the eyes of Neta Golan in a Palestinian compound ("The World Is Watching," May 13). But I wish Neta could have experienced being at a store or shopping mall when one of those Palestinian homicide bombers blew themselves up. Then we could see another view—one of necessary defense by the Israelis.

Paul Dale Roberts
Elk Grove, California

I was disappointed in Joel Bleifuss' tepid editorial ("Stand Up for Peace," April 29). Pathetically, Bleifuss is as tentative as the Bush administration. The one and only meaningful thing that the United States can do is to end its military aid to Israel until Israel withdraws from the Occupied Territories, adheres to all relevant U.N. resolutions and international law regarding the Palestinians, and removes its apartheid laws. Stop U.S. aid today, and the conflict would end tomorrow.

Maggie Coulter
Sacramento, California

While I agree with Joel Bleifuss that certain tactics of the Israel Defense Forces are deserving of condemnation, I cannot help but note the absence of any similar condemnation of the Palestinian tactics such as the use of suicide bombers to target innocent Israeli citizens.

As an American Jew who fully supported Oslo, I lament the election of Ariel Sharon as Israeli prime minister. But I also am unable to forget that Sharon's predecessor, Ehud Barak, put his entire career and reputation on the line by trying to engage the Arabs and the Palestinians in genuine peace negotiations.

Instead of engaging him, Arafat and the Arabs gave Barak the back of their hands and started the second *intifada*. Now we have ample evidence of Palestinian Authority complicity in the campaign of suicide bombings.

It seems to me that the Arab states and the Palestinians have never reached consensus among themselves on a positive agenda about what a Palestinian state would look like. Would it be secular? Islamic? Democratic? Autocratic? Theocratic?

The only thing they can agree on is hatred of the Jews. Thus the rejection of Barak; the last thing these folks wanted was

an Israeli leader who was truly serious about making peace.

If Bleifuss really wants to "stand up for peace," he should be at least as energetic about holding the Palestinians and the Arabs to account as he is with Sharon and Israel.

David Koppelman
Los Angeles

Just One Decimal Off ...

We'll disseminate your inspiring and incisive piece on currency transaction taxes, or Tobin taxes, but we'll change your headline (April 29). "Give Us 0.1 Percent," is what recent proposals suggest, not the 0.01 Percent in your title.

The late James Tobin, Nobel economist from Yale, originally proposed 1 percent on foreign exchanges. That has since been amended to one-tenth of a percent (or 0.1 percent, or 0.001 as a decimal). But wherever you put the dot, it's a tiny tax that could provide for urgent global needs, while taming some quite unruly markets.

For more information about the issue and the campaigns, visit www.tobintax.org.

Ruthanne Cecil
Tobin Tax Project Director
Arcata, California

David Moberg replies: I did introduce decimal confusion. There have been recent proposals, such as in a report to the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation

and Development, for a Tobin tax as low as one one-hundredth of a percent (0.01 percent, or one basis point). But most progressive economists and non-governmental organizations advocate a transaction tax of one-tenth of a percent (0.1 percent) or more, and that's the rate that I should have emphasized.

No Fooling

Thanks for the good news on the Hudson River Greenway ("Pedal Revolution," April 29). But, let's not be fooled. The entrenched national interests responsible for continuing to pave over wetlands, farmland and forests aren't "rediscovering the virtues of car-free public space."

Oil-industry influence persists through the willing participants of car culture, who are deluded that there is no other way. For "paving moratorium" fact sheets, check out www.culturechange.org.

Jan Lundberg
Sustainable Energy Institute
Arcata, California

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Terry LaBan



Caving In?

Will the Israeli Supreme Court back "transfer" of Palestinians?

By Oren Yiftachel and Neve Gordon

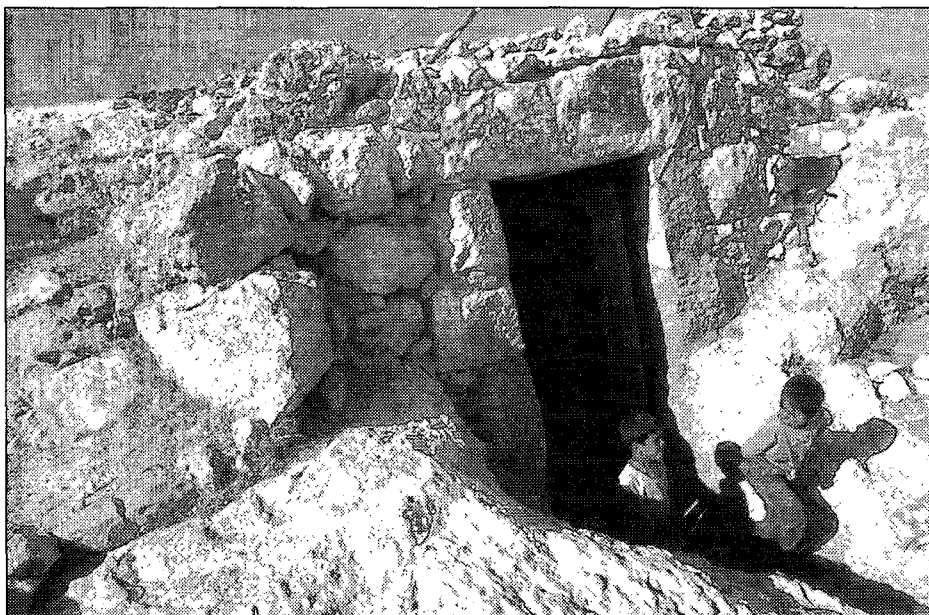
BE'ER SHEVA, ISRAEL—Although the level of violence seems to have decreased following the withdrawal of most Israeli forces from the occupied West Bank, Israel has once again reached an important crossroad.

For some months now the nationalist camp, aided by the media, has been trickling into the public discourse the idea of expelling Palestinians—branded in Israel as "transfer"—despite the fact that it is antithetical to both international norms and human rights covenants.

There are, of course, various formulations for how the transfer of the Palestinian population should be carried out, ranging from the aggressive version proposed by ex-minister Avigdor Lieberman, through the "soft" version of "voluntary transfer" promulgated by the right-wing party Moledet, all the way to the idea of abrogating the political rights of the Palestinians and transferring them from their land and homes "only at a time of need," as suggested by minister and cabinet member Efraim Eitam.

Accordingly, the idea of expelling Palestinians from their land has acquired legitimacy within broad sectors of the Israeli public. Recently, transfer proponents have been handed the chance to begin implementing an expulsion at the expense of a particularly weak Palestinian population, the cave inhabitants living in the South Hebron region of the occupied West Bank. The impact of such an expulsion, particularly as a political and legal precedent, cannot be overstated. A "small" transfer now is likely to sanction more extensive expulsions in the future, just as the first entry of the Israeli military into the Occupied Territories during the summer of 2001 prepared the ground for this year's massive and deadly invasion dubbed "Defensive Shield."

The cave dwellers live off farming and tending flocks and have preserved a unique cultural way of life since the early 19th century. After the 1948 war, they lived under Jordanian rule, while losing all their land located on Israel's side of the border. Following the occupation of the



CHRIS HONDROS / GETTY IMAGES

Palestinian children emerge from the cave where they live in the Yatta region of Israel. Nearby Jewish settlers are putting increased pressure on the cave dwellers to leave.

West Bank in 1967, Israel set up military bases on parts of their property and closed off a whole section for training purposes. The inhabitants' living space was accordingly already small when the government began (in the early '80s) to establish Jewish settlements in the region.

In November 1999, Ehud Barak's government, in coordination with settlers, carried out the first expulsion, in which 750 local residents were driven out of their homes on the pretense they were invading state land. Despite a Supreme Court injunction permitting Palestinian residents to return, the cave dwellers continued to be exposed to pressure from the Israeli military and Jewish settlers, including the destruction of dwellings; ruining water holes; uprooting olive trees; and preventing residents from reaching their farming and grazing land.

Simultaneously, the government continued to expropriate more land, setting up illegal Jewish outposts and issuing writs limiting the stay of Palestinian residents in the area. The principle was to establish a new reality on the ground.

Indeed, all these actions were carried out by the military—whether under Defense Ministers Moshe Arens, Binyamin Ben-Eliezer or Barak—with the aim of exhausting the residents and forcing them out. It seems that the defense ministers acted according to a premeditated plan whose practical purpose was to annex the whole

area to Israel, "clean" of Arabs, to create a corridor from Be'er Sheva to the Jewish settlement Kiryat Arba, the same area that appears on maps the Israeli delegation presented to Palestinians during the Camp David peace talks.

The threat of transfer has been hovering over the cave dwellers ever since the 1999 expulsion. At the end of June, the Supreme Court will convene to discuss their status. Underlying the talk of "security considerations" and "illegality" is a vital question: Will the Supreme Court permit the Sharon government to carry out a "population transfer"?

If the Court decides to expel the Palestinian residents, it will create a dangerous precedent, essentially conferring political and moral legitimacy to population transfer. Such a decision will shake the precarious barriers still holding back the expulsion option and inevitably escalate the bloody conflict. In the past months, the Court has rejected more than 30 appeals filed by human rights organizations in the name of Palestinians who have suffered atrocious violations. It is with great apprehension that we wait to see whether the Court will turn a blind eye to the cave dwellers' plight, or whether it will prevent the further deterioration of ethnic relations in this troubled land. ■

Oren Yiftachel and Neve Gordon teach at Ben-Gurion University.

Feeling Fein

Elections in a changing Ireland

By Kelly Candaele

DUBLIN, IRELAND—It was a foregone conclusion heading into general elections on May 17 that Bertie Ahern, leader of Fianna Fail, the Republic of Ireland's largest political party, would be returned as prime minister for the next four years. The real question for the pundits and poll watchers was whether Ahern and his party would win an outright majority, allowing them to govern without a coalition.

Fianna Fail won 81 seats and just over 41 percent of "first preference" votes in Ireland's system of proportional representation, in which voters rank candidates for 166 seats. Those numbers saw them far outdistancing Fine Gael, their traditional political rival and challenger for power. Ahern ran a disciplined, "It's the economy, stupid" campaign, taking advantage

of a general feeling of improvement and prosperity among a large section of the voters, and a bounce from the fragile but enduring "success" of the Northern Ireland peace process. Ireland has experienced the highest growth rates in Western Europe in recent years and has cut unemployment rates in Northern Ireland dramatically, courtesy of multinational capital and large E.U. investments.

But increased prosperity has brought problems that Ahern's tepid leadership has failed to resolve. With Fianna Fail occupying the center-right, a divided electorate went looking for alternatives in emerging parties that offered a more radical critique.

The most significant long-term development is Sinn Fein's emergence in the Republic as a political force. The party held only one seat in the Dail, Ireland's parliament, prior to the elections: By winning five this time, they displayed a remarkable capacity for turning a grassroots focus on local issues into votes. Martin McGuinness, Sinn Fein education minister in Northern Ireland, told a jubilant group of supporters in Tralee, "The political landscape has already changed in

Northern Ireland, and now it is changing in the south. This is a decisive step forward for the party."

Campaigning in central Dublin, Sinn Fein candidate Nicky Kehoe fell less than 100 votes short of winning a seat. While his literature emphasized a united future Ireland and elimination of Third World debt, voters at the door had different issues in mind. "I was a little afraid" of Sinn Fein's association with the IRA, says Karen, a voter who declined to give her last name. "But if this guy can help me get a speed bump in my street to protect my kids, he has my vote."

While all politics may be local, the dynamics that threaten to turn Ireland into an economically bifurcated country are national and international. "Ireland has become a two-tiered country," Labour candidate Michael D. Higgins commented before heading out to canvass in Galway. "We are now a place where greed is the dominant ethos and the top 20 percent of the people have gotten rich while the underclass has grown dramatically."

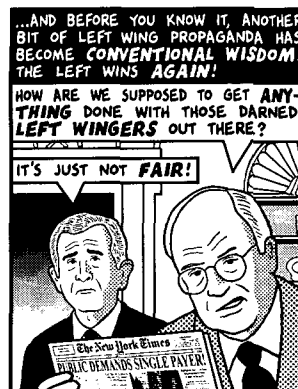
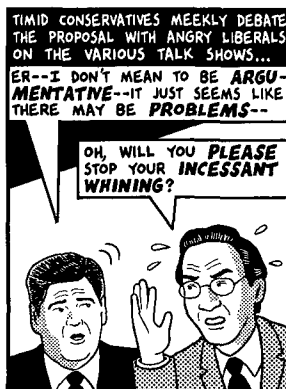
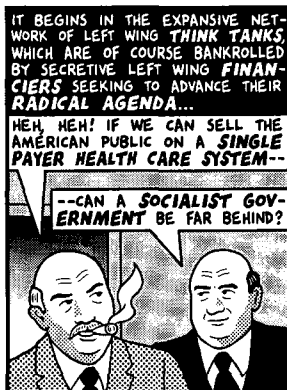
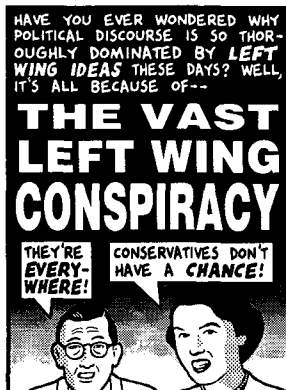
The quaint, postcard picture image of Ireland is gone for good, at least for those who live there—and many would say good riddance to a Catholic-dominated, insular and conservative culture. Ireland is more self-confident, more oriented toward Europe and less obsessed with Great Britain as the source of all of its failures. But crime and drug abuse have increased, the national health system is in steep decline, and housing prices have skyrocketed beyond the reach of the working class.

Despite having fallen just short of winning a majority of seats—Fianna Fail thus faces the potentially tricky task of securing a governing coalition—Ahern and his party are in firm control of the political process, and the opposition has fractured into a number of smaller contenders. The possibility exists for a Sinn Fein-Green Party alignment that could offer hope for those left out of Ireland's newfound prosperity.

The Green Party, which won six seats in the election and showed surprising strength, has worked with Sinn Fein supporters for years at the local level. Morna Regan, a Dublin resident who gave her preference votes to the Greens and an independent candidate, commented dryly on election day near her polling station: "Look around you at the pollution and the traffic. There has to be an alternative to this." ■

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



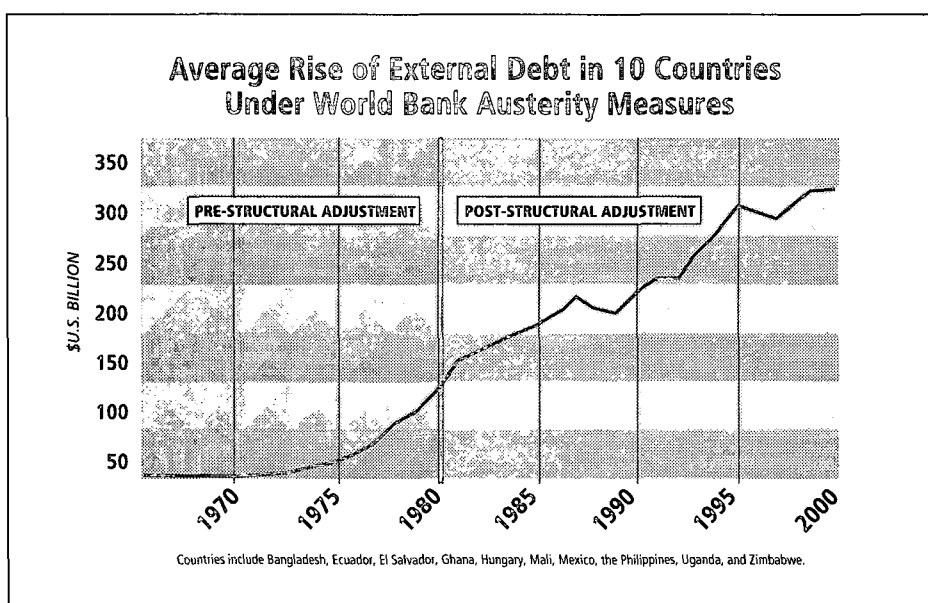
Deaf Ears

No thanks, World Bank says to a critical study

By Chris Strohm

A global network of nongovernmental groups says the executive leadership of the World Bank has downplayed and dismissed a new report that is heavily critical of structural adjustment programs—and the bank now appears to be trying to bury the findings for good.

The Structural Adjustment Participatory Review International Network (SAPRIN), a network of more than a thousand civil society organizations, spent about four years conducting a joint initiative with the World Bank and the governments of several countries to study the impact of structural adjustment programs, delivering the final, 200-page study to Washington in April. But Stephanie Weinberg, a member of the SAPRIN global secretariat, says bank



leaders started to dispute the report as soon as critical findings began to surface. She says the bank has not offered any concrete ways in which the findings will be reviewed or incorporated into changing macroeconomic policy, which also violates an original agreement.

The report, titled "The Policy Roots of Economic Crisis and Poverty," concludes that structural adjustment measures have significantly increased poverty, inequality and social exclusion in the 10 countries studied (Bangladesh, Ecuador, Hungary, Mexico and Ghana among them). The study found

Prison Abuse Update

A murder trial featured in the June 10 issue of *In These Times* ("Abuse Inside the Prison Wire") has taken a turn for the worse. On May 10, Florida State Attorney Bill Cervone announced that he will drop charges against five former guards accused in the fatal beating of prisoner Frank Valdes.

Three guards were acquitted of beating Valdes to death in February, and now the remaining five will avoid a criminal trial. Though both the defense and the prosecutors agree a murder did take place on Death Row at the Florida State Prison in Starke, no one will be held accountable. "We took our best shot, with our best evidence, against the most culpable defendants, and the jury chose not to accept that evidence," Cervone said. "The evidence against the remaining defendants does not indicate any likelihood of us obtaining a conviction against them."

Angela Wright, a spokeswoman for Amnesty International, says the organization is concerned by the prospect of not holding anyone accountable for Valdes' death. "It sends a very disturbing message."

Though none of the guards will be rehired, they may still face trial. Two court actions are yet unresolved: a possible federal civil rights case currently being investigated by the Justice Department and a civil suit filed by Valdes' ex-wife, Wanda. The federal action "could serve to redress any shortcomings in state law," Wright says.

—Kate Krepel

Illinois Harassment Suit Settled for \$300,000

On May 22, U.S. District Judge Joan B. Gottschall gave final approval to a \$300,000 settlement of a sexual harassment class action case filed in Illinois just a year ago. The suit was filed on behalf of 69 mostly African-American women working at Bob Watson Chevrolet, one of the Chicago area's largest car dealerships.

The suit involved a population that almost never benefits from sexual harassment laws. The women were employed by Labor Ready (which was not involved in the suit) and had worked at the dealership two to six weeks. "This is a long-needed vindication of the rights of temporary female workers to dignity and equal treatment in the workplace," said Michael Fridkin, a lawyer for the Chicago Lawyer's Committee and lead lawyer for the suit. "This settlement [is] an important symbolic, as well as practical, victory."

The suit charged that Bob Watson managers, in addition to other routine forms of harassment, demanded sexual favors in return for job security and increased compensation. Gottschall ordered the dealership to institute a comprehensive sexual harassment training program, at its own expense, and to file certification of its compliance with the program on a quarterly basis for the next three years.

Sexual harassment complaints increased nearly 47 percent from 1992 to 1995, but have held steady since that year, according to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Sexual harassment complaints filed by men—14 percent of the total—have also increased by half since 1992.

—Kristie Reilly

that such programs lead to a loss of domestic productive capacity and jobs; a reduction in small farm agriculture, which leads to a loss of food security; diminishing real wages, workers rights and job security; and reduced access to affordable, quality services.

In an interview during the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil in early February, Weinberg and other members of SAPRIN said the bank even tried to stop funding for the study as it was being done by blocking funds from European governments. "At the global level we encountered obstacles basically throughout the entire process," Weinberg says.

In May, Weinberg said that though bank officials at the local level remained helpful and committed to the study, the bank's top leadership pressured SAPRIN to conclude the report prematurely before unilaterally declaring the study over in July 2001.

Susana Cruickshank, a member of the global SAPRIN steering committee from Mexico, said the bank began to withdraw

support for the study the more it investigated the effects of structural adjustment. "When [the bank] started seeing that we were really taking seriously the [idea of] criticizing the old model and the old rationale of structural adjustment," she said, "this is where the World Bank started cutting off its commitments with us."

Ironically, the initiative was started with World Bank President James Wolfensohn's help after the bank challenged NGOs to review structural adjustment programs. According to the original agreement, the bank agreed to consider the findings of the initiative in making "concrete changes in macroeconomic policy" and to "identify practical and necessary changes in economic policies that will improve the lives of common people."

The bank's senior leadership had also originally agreed to hold a high-profile, public forum with SAPRIN to discuss the study once it was completed. Wolfensohn met with SAPRIN representatives for 20

minutes when the report was released in April, but Weinberg says the bank has "aggressively avoided" such a forum. The bank did recently request a longer meeting, Weinberg says, but only after the story was featured in European media.

Unsurprisingly, bank officials deny these charges. Coralie Gevers, an economist who worked on the report, says the findings are being distributed internally for review at the highest levels of the bank. "If we send back comments saying we don't agree with the findings of the report, that doesn't mean we are withdrawing from it."

She says the bank is planning to hold a meeting in July with SAPRIN representatives to discuss the findings in detail. SAPRIN isn't expecting much, however. "No one in the civil society network has any great illusions about the willingness of the bank to change," Weinberg says. "And it's more clear than ever that change is only going to happen by pressure on many different fronts." ■

Say What? 5.2

Researchers at MIT have developed a new and more convincing technique for manipulating video images so that people appear to be saying things they never actually said, according to a report in the *Boston Globe*. Using as little as two minutes of video of a person speaking, a computer captures images of the full range of mouth and facial movements around certain sounds. It then reconstitutes these images around new combinations of sounds, making the subject of the image appear to say new things, even in difficult foreign languages. In lab demonstrations, viewers could not distinguish between the real video speech and the simulated ones. Next task for the lead researcher: developing "a more complex model that would teach the computer to simulate basic emotions."

Packers vs. Pickers 2.5

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals will do anything to stop cruelty to our nonhuman friends. The organization recently sent a letter to Austin High School in the infamous Hormel company town of Austin, Minnesota, to berate

administrators for retaining the "Packer" as the school mascot.

"As you know, the Packers are named, euphemistically, after slaughterhouse workers, which is nothing to be proud of," wrote PETA's Dan Shannon, as quoted in the *Chicago Tribune*. "They'd never be called the Austin High Animal Killers, yet that's an accurate description of what 'packers' do." Shannon went on to suggest "Pickers" as an alternative.

The people of Austin refuse to be enlightened. "The great thing about America is that people have the right to express their views," Austin High principal Joe Brown told the *Tribune*. "And we, as Americans, have a right to ignore those views. And that's pretty much what we're going to do."

Freak Out 2.9

Poor Rita Wilson. Her career wouldn't be in shambles if she just would have taken to heart the lesson Kevin Bacon taught us all in *Footloose*. Wilson, vice principal at Rancho Bernardo High School near San Diego, is the one

who instigated the infamous party check at a school dance, lifting girls' skirts to make sure they weren't wearing thongs. In the outrage that ensued, Wilson was suspended, and parents are calling for her job.

Now Wilson tearfully remonstrates that she was only acting only to protect young eyes from the sight of butt cheeks as students started to "freak." Freaking is a new dance of untrammelled lasciviousness, she explained, and efforts to suppress it at the school had proved futile. "Freak dancing is not a fun thing to watch all night," Wilson told Reuters. "If [the students] were going to freak, at least their bottoms were going to be covered."



LARRY LABAN

Appall-o-Meter

By Dave Mulcahey

Enlightened Educators

Teaching social responsibility

By Eleanor J. Bader

BOSTON—"We used to speak of public education as the crucible of democracy," says Sonia Nieto, professor of education at the University of Massachusetts. But no more. In an era of standardized tests, school privatization and corporate-sponsored lesson plans, American teachers seem to have forgotten a truth that Nieto, the first member of her family to finish high school, learned early: Public schools have the potential to create an egalitarian and participatory society.

Speaking at a party to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR), a Cambridge, Massachusetts-based group whose mission is to help young people "develop the convictions and skills to shape a safe, sustainable, democratic and just world," Nieto was addressing the converted. Nonetheless, the notion of social responsibility—the idea that social and emotional learning are as important as subject mastery—inspired the crowd.

And ESR's lesson plans and readings to promote peacemaking in classrooms, schools and communities have proven popular. Within weeks of September 11, for example, ESR's web site (www.esrnational.org) posted a plethora of progressive teaching aids: "Civil Liberties and Terrorism" and "Countering Bias Against Arab-American, Muslim and South Asian Students" among them. Parents were also encouraged to use ESR materials. A discussion guide, "Talking to Children about Violence and other Sensitive and Complex Issues in the World," had thousands of takers. Likewise, materials on how to talk to youth about death, terrorism and religious fundamentalism were widely utilized.

But the group's hallmark is its day-to-day presence in schools. Originally, ESR worked to educate students about the arms race and nuclear weapons. Then, when the Soviet Union collapsed, ESR turned its attention to youth violence. In 1985, two New York City educators, Linda Lantieri and Tom Roderick, created the Resolving

Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP). This kindergarten-to-12th grade initiative helps students become active listeners and assertive, rather than aggressive, communicators. RCCP shows how teachers can help students manage their anger and become skilled mediators of classroom conflict.

While teachers capture the lion's share of RCCP attention, the program also reaches out to support staff—like cafeteria workers, and bus drivers—since they, too, spend a great deal of time with students. Similarly, RCCP's Peace in the Family program trains adult caregivers in conflict resolution and encouraging dialogue.

Other ESR programs bring discussion of race, class, gender, sexual preference and feelings into literature classes. "We have a tool called a Conflict Escalator which analyzes how conflicts can escalate or de-escalate," says ESR Executive Director Larry Dieringer. "We believe it deepens emotional development to talk conflicts out, and allows teachers to enhance what they're doing."

RCCP has spread to 16 school districts and more than 400 schools since its incep-

tion, and is presently one of the country's largest and longest-running emotional learning programs. Still, ESR knows what it is up against. According to the Justice Department, 6,451 schools reported at least one violent clash involving a weapon to police in 2000. Approximately 134,000 acts of violence are perpetrated against teachers annually, and nearly 200 in-school shootings have taken place since 1992. Most states have responded by upping expenditures for metal detectors and armed guards.

ESR has consistently denounced this trend. "When students feel safe and have a voice in decision-making, they can thrive in school," Dieringer says. Nieto concurs, reiterating an old-fashioned dictum: "All students need caring, loving teachers who believe in them."

Such passionate dedication is rarely heard in today's frenzied rush toward academic and behavioral standardization. ESR calls it character education. "It's not enough for kids to be successful people," RCCP Program Director Jennifer Selfridge concludes. "Social and emotional learning have to be part of every subject." ■

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INFINITE PERSON

Collect Them All

By Bill Berkowitz

Ted McManus will not be silenced by President Bush's war on terrorism. The Madison, Wisconsin-based artist and activist has created a set of anti-war trading cards that are a sharp counterpoint to the pro-war sets issued by the Topps Company and U.S. Trading Cards since September 11.

McManus' "American Crusade 2001" cards are posted at the Infinite Jest Web site (www.infinitejest.org), which he and his longtime writing partner Brian Moore began discussing in June 2000, but set up last fall. The trading cards, which can be downloaded free, buck the faux patriotism trend of a number of corporations who have tied their marketing strategies to support for the war on terrorism. ("Fun to collect! Fun to trade! Fun to drain a box of inkjet cartridges!" the site says.) They like to think of their site as "like the *Onion*, only more bitter," McManus says.

Pointed, cutting, angry, funny and sometimes over the top, each of the 77 cards contains a featured drawing along with a smaller, inset illustration. The cards cover a broad swath of issues relating to the war on terrorism: With shifting military alliances, as spelled out in the "Rumsfeld Doctrine," an up-to-date scorecard is essential. And the Internet allows McManus to keep the roster timely.

His foreign leader cards, for example, depict ever-shifting coalitions: Mohammad Khatami of Iran started at "evil," went to "good,"

and, after the State of the Union address, went back to the "evil" camp. North Korea's Kim Jong-Il—an "axis of evil" leader—went from "irrelevant" to "evil."

The set also addresses important issues on the domestic front. The "American Public" card, subtitled the "Land of Mass Hypnosis," depicts the American public as wide-eyed sheep, while a haloed President Bush guides the flock using a flag for a staff. "Military Tribunals" portrays a kangaroo with gavel dwarfing the Department of Justice, while a skittish-looking Captain Kangaroo peers up from the inset. A flag with corporate logos in place of stars and a circled fistful of dollars is titled the "Corporate Citizens" card.

McManus has been combining his humor and art skills for some time. As the Persian Gulf crisis was heating up in the fall of 1990, McManus, then a student at Clarkson University in upstate New York, put his artistic skills to work producing a "Gulf Crisis coloring book" for the university's humor magazine. McManus describes Clarkson, where he majored in computer science, as so sleepy that when he organized a demonstration "calling for balance between research and teaching in tenure decisions," it was the first campus demonstration in 10 years.

He launched the card project in mid-October because, he says, "I was angered at the colossal abuses of power, both foreign and domestic, that 93 percent of Americans—and seemingly 99 percent of the American media—were cheering on. So I turned

to the Web, where anybody can instantly become a publisher with global reach. And I switched from earnest prose to visual satire, in hopes of hooking a larger audience.

"I also expected Topps to cash in again as they'd done with the Gulf War, when they printed three sets focusing overwhelmingly on gleaming military hardware, entirely divorced from its effects on people, of course. Since I think that's disgusting, I wanted to provide some counter-propaganda."

McManus says that he chose the Internet because "we're dealing with subject matter of global concern. Had we printed on physical squares of cardboard, people in Iceland, Japan and the Netherlands would not have primary-source evidence that not all Americans are raving imperialist warmongers."

Thus far, McManus has received surprisingly little flak. "A few people miss the irony," he said, "but that's the ironist's occupational hazard. A handful of people assumed it's a capitalist endeavor when it's quite the opposite. My favorite piece of adversarial mail to date was, as flames go, pretty mild." ("Your parody is what's insulting, not the Topps cards," a visitor wrote. "The Topps cards are a tribute.")

"Fellow dissenters have thanked me for the morale boost in a time when dissent has been so unpopular," McManus says. "But hands down, the best feedback I've received came from a father intending to use the cards to discuss the war with his eldest daughter." ■

And the Winner Is ...

By Susan J. Douglas

OK, kids, I'm starting a contest. I am now accepting nominations for the most predictable, hackneyed moments and offerings of the corporate media.

This promises to be a fierce competition, especially since we are entering the summer months, the season of reruns, summer replacements and slow news days. (See, our news media seem to think the rest of the world goes on vacation in the summer, which isn't a huge change from their coverage of international news in the winter, except now we'll get even more forest fires and floods.) Anyhow, here are my initial nominations.

First, of course, is the "what did the president know and when did he know it" cliché that framed the embarrassing revelation that Bush, busy tearing around his ranch in his pickup, was briefed about possible terrorist attacks against the United States last August.

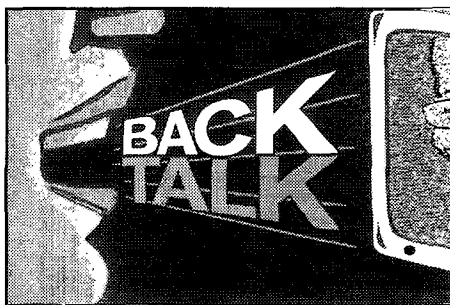
Terry Moran at ABC used the "what did he know and when did he know it" phrase twice in his report on the revelations. Not only are many of us simply sick of this Watergate-era linguistic barnacle, but it has become so overused, and thus obscuring of the differences between political scandals, that it can actually prompt a dismissive stance toward the topic at hand. It suggests a one-size-fits-all media framework of political wrongdoing. And if the actions were not comparable to Watergate (you know, breaking and entering, money laundering, obstruction of justice), it appears that the media are simply sensationalizing and exaggerating the seriousness of the latest outrage.

"What did he know and when did he know it" has become the news media equivalent of crying wolf. And when covering this administration, the FBI and the CIA, the last thing you want the media to convey is that this crowd's concomitant incompetence and lust for more power are being unfairly exaggerated.

By the way, I enjoyed seeing the file footage from last August reminding us that Dubya was working so little that he could take a four-week vacation on his estate. But let's remember what TV news

was doing too—not hard-hitting investigative reports about international terrorism or the Taliban or unrest in the Middle East. They were wallowing in Gary Condit and shark attacks.

My second nomination goes to the PBS *NewsHour's* coverage of welfare reform. When will any of the news shows actually feature a welfare-rights activist, a welfare recipient they don't demonize, or, hey, how



about just a woman with children who knows something about the issue?

But no—we always get two financially comfortable, middle-of-the-road-to-conservative white guys to pontificate about what poor mothers and their kids really need. Just days before the House passed the Bush-backed welfare bill that requires poor mothers to work even longer hours than under the 1996 Clinton legislation, the *NewsHour* brought us Reps. Benjamin Cardin (D-Maryland) and Clay Shaw (R-Florida). Here was the debate: Cardin declared himself "proud of the progress" made under welfare reform, and Shaw described the 1996 act as a "rescue program."

Well, if you look at the decline in welfare rolls, and not at the huge increase in demand last winter in cities around the country for emergency food and shelter (the largest increase in 10 years), then I guess you can declare it progress. The swelling ranks of the homeless (1.1 million in California alone) include women no longer on welfare who are working but making so little money that they can't afford to pay rent. But I guess that's progress, too.

My third nomination goes to all the networks for their ongoing and persistent under-representation of women and

minorities—especially Latinos, Native Americans and Asian-Americans—in entertainment programming.

The much-admired children's advocacy group Children NOW, based in Oakland, has just released its annual study of diversity in prime-time programming, and it's not a reassuring picture. While nearly 60 percent of shows airing at 10 p.m.—most of them dramas—now feature racially mixed casts, the shows that kids watch most, those airing at 8 p.m., are the least racially diverse and most-segregated shows in prime time. Only 7 percent of the sitcoms airing during this time slot have mixed casts. Sixteen percent of prime-time characters are African-American, but in the early evening they are almost exclusively in sitcoms, many of them segregated by race. When Native Americans appear (which is hardly ever) they are usually typecast as spiritual advisers.

When a children's advocacy group is forced to praise *WWF Smackdown!* for being more racially diverse than early evening sitcoms, you get a sense of how embarrassing the networks' performance remains when it

If the population of prime time were a room of 100 people, 74 of them would be white.

comes to representing the diversity of the country. If the population of the prime time season were a room of 100 people, the study notes, 74 of them would be white and 64 of them would be men. Four would be Latino, and one would be gay or lesbian.

Not surprisingly, Arab-Americans had little to cheer about when watching TV. At the request of the Bush administration, FOX's *America's Most Wanted* featured manhunt stories related to 9/11, and these two stories alone accounted for nearly 40 percent of the portrayals of Middle Easterners on television; the few such characters we saw were primarily shown in connection to terrorism.

I realize I'm being tiresome in pointing out the obvious about the corporate media—their journalistic laziness, their elitism, their ongoing institutional racism and sexism. But, jeez, they are being really tiresome, too. ■

The Savings and Clone Scandal

By Ana Marie Cox

Debate over the Senate's two competing cloning bills—one that would ban all cloning and one that would allow "therapeutic cloning"—has produced some of the year's most compelling, if occasionally gruesome, political theater.

In April, half a dozen paraplegics and quadriplegics hung themselves from a mock gallows in front of the Capitol to illustrate that a ban on all cloning was the equivalent of a death sentence for those whose lives may hinge on the medical advances it may bring.

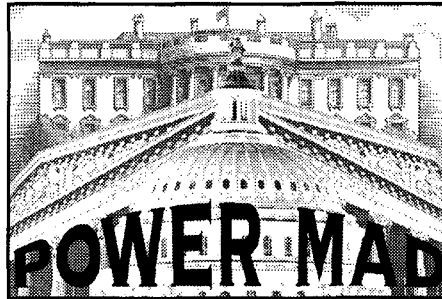
Anti-cloning activists, in turn, have produced their own paralyzed spokesmen: George W. Bush appeared with former New York policeman Steven McDonald, who is paralyzed from the neck down, to reiterate his own opposition to all forms of cloning research. Typically not satisfied with one negative when two will do, Bush told reporters, "We must prevent human cloning by stopping it before it starts. ... Life is a creation, not a commodity."

That's strong anti-market talk from a president whose entire health care platform rests on the *deus ex machina* of free market competition. As recently as last February, Bush insisted that when it comes to caring for the lives of citizens, "government's role is not to centralize, nor is government's role to control the delivery of medicine." Rather, he said, the government's role was to encourage "individuals to make decisions in the marketplace."

Dramatically underscoring the president's opposition to governmental oversight when it comes to making life a commodity, Bush has yet to appoint a chief of the Food and Drug Administration, the very agency charged with enforcing whatever restrictions on research the Senate passes as well as all current consumer protection regulations.

Insiders say Bush's initial candidate, Alastair Wood, may have lost his shot at the nomination because of his "controversial" support for competition-restricting procedures like the implementation of a drug-safety board and curbs on direct-to-consumer advertising of new drugs.

Certainly, cloning technologies could lead to important medical advances, and if the issue were one of pure science, the choice to pursue research—however cautiously—would be an easy one. But the glowing optimism of research proponents obscures the shadowy presence of a growing biotech lobby.



Campaign contributions from pharmaceutical and health service companies have increased from just over \$3 million in 1990 to just over \$10 million so far in 2002. It would be nice to believe that the pro-research bill's cosponsors, Sens. Tom Harkin (D-Iowa) and Arlen Specter (R-Pennsylvania), support therapeutic cloning because, as Specter puts it, "ideology has no place when it comes to medical science." Yet it's hard not to connect that conclusion with the tens of thousands of dollars that biotech has placed in the senator's pockets. And surely it's more than coincidence that the most celebrated pro-research convert, Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), received a generous \$399,000 in 2000 from the side that, Hatch says, will "help set the ethical and moral standards for the rest of the world."

If only we could be sure that those standards would be high. In the wake of 9/11, the biotech industry asked Congress for reforms that would make producing vaccines for use against bioterrorism attacks more profitable (like greater long-term financial commitment by the government and quicker review of new vaccines by the FDA). At the same time, lobbyists and executives protested a global treaty that would impose random inspections and stricter review of the production of potential bioterror weapons (which lobbyists

claimed would impose higher costs and invade corporate privacy); a treaty that Bush obligingly declined to sign.

More chilling is the growth of the "human tissue industry," which offers a bleak case-study of a likely future should cloning research be approved in the current atmosphere of free market euphoria and health industry privatization. The *New York Times* reported in January that tissue donation is virtually unregulated.

While it is illegal to sell body parts, companies may charge an unspecified, unregulated, "reasonable" fee for procuring, handling and shipping them. According to the *Times*, a typical human body is worth about \$220,000 in parts, and for-profit tissue banks have found numerous ways to pump that number up, from accepting tissues rejected by non-profit services to allowing funeral home employees to harvest donations.

At present, tissue regeneration is one of the few practical applications of therapeutic cloning; imagine what kind of "procurement" fee could be rung up for custom-made tissues. Imagine what corners might be cut to maximize profits.

The vote in the Senate is close, but observers say momentum on the side of research is building. This isn't so bad—what's scary is that research isn't all we'd

The glowing optimism of research proponents obscures the shadowy presence of the biotech lobby.

be saying "yes" to. The regulatory structure designed to maximize that research's benefit and minimize its harm is disintegrating. Both sides of the debate contend that the ethical question at the heart of the cloning debate is really about the value we place on human life: Research foes say that human life is too valuable to let science meddle with its innermost processes; research advocates say that human life is too valuable to ignore the potentially life-saving advances that research might bring.

Either way, human life is too valuable to continue to let the open market decide its price. ■

Not So Fast

Unexpected opposition sidetracks Bush's free trade push

By David Moberg

Despite its aura of inevitability, the juggernaut of corporate globalization has hit a rough patch. Grassroots opposition continues as the system is wracked by more widespread skeptical assessments and intensifying conflicts among governments. Even a new survey of international finance by *The Economist* concludes that 2001 may have marked "when two decades of mostly unbroken progress for capitalism gave way to something more ambiguous and uncertain." The result is a moment of political opportunity for progressive critics of globalization—and a moment of risk that reactionary backlash will gain ground.

The fate in Congress of presidential trade promotion authority—formerly known as "fast track"—is instructive. In December, the House approved the bill by only one vote. Opponents have twice blocked renewal since the authority—rules that prohibit congressional revision of international commercial agreements negotiated by the president—expired in 1994, but Republican discipline and the usual deal-making eked out a victory.

Senators typically have been more supportive of "free trade" policies. But when the Senate took up the issue in May, there was unusually vigorous debate on a wide range of issues, including assistance to trade-displaced workers, protection of domestic laws, labor rights, environmental protection and the powers of Congress to regulate trade. The crucial vote came on a bipartisan amendment by Sens. Mark Dayton (D-Minnesota) and Larry Craig (R-Idaho) that would allow Congress to raise objections about provisions in any commercial agreement that threatened U.S. trade laws.



NATHAN STRAIT

Last fall 72 Senators instructed U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick not to make U.S. trade laws negotiable in any new World Trade Organization talks. Yet at the Doha WTO meetings, Zoellick did precisely what they told him not to do. "Every time Zoellick argued against the Dayton-Craig amendment, he got more votes for it," says AFL-CIO trade analyst Thea Lee. "He argued he had to have the freedom to weaken trade laws, because if he doesn't he can't clinch a deal, but that will be so unpopular that he has to have fast track to get it passed."

On the key procedural motion, the Senate voted 61 to 38 in favor of the Dayton-Craig amendment, with 16 Republicans joining in support. The administration went berserk, threatening a presidential veto. Cabinet members launched a blitz against other amendments, several of which might have passed without such intimidation by the White House and Senate leadership. Nevertheless, the Senate bill—contrary to White House wishes—expands trade adjustment assistance for displaced workers (though not workers indi-

rectly impacted, like truck drivers), including limited wage insurance for some older workers and tax credits to help defer the costs of health insurance.

However, despite a solid majority in favor of guaranteeing health insurance for retired steelworkers from bankrupt employers, supporters could not end a filibuster by Sen. Phil Gramm (R-Texas). A few minor progressive amendments did succeed, such as Sen. Paul Wellstone's (D-Minnesota) request for a study of the effect of globalization on workers. But the Senate refused to require enforcement of core International Labor Organization standards (like the prohibition of child labor) in all bilateral trade deals. It also failed to revise language—worse than previous fast track bills—actually prohibiting trade agreements from enforcing each country's own laws on workers rights or environmental protection. The Senate also rejected Sen. John Kerry's (D-Massachusetts) initiative to limit the ability of foreign corporations to sue—as they can under NAFTA's notorious investor rights chapter—to overturn U.S. laws, a measure with widespread support from state and local elected officials.

Although conservative Democrats provided the margin to defeat most amendments, many traditionally ardent free-traders, like Connecticut Democrats Joseph Lieberman and Christopher Dodd, argued for stronger protection of workers rights. Similarly in the House, many free-trade Democrats, like Robert Matsui (D-California), have become critics of fast track. "Members of Congress on one issue or another have become personally aware that today's international commercial agreements aren't about tariffs and quotas but about domestic, value-oriented decisions about policy," including environmental and consumer protections, says Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch.

Now fast track goes to a tricky conference committee. Republicans will try to strip the Dayton-Craig amendment and probably reduce trade assistance. But such action could make it harder to get the conference bill approved in the House, where the balance of power is shaky. At least two right-wing Republicans have recently said they would not vote again for fast track, and several solid Democratic opponents were absent in December. Other members of Congress may be upset by promised deals that the administration hasn't delivered. The Senate debate helped highlight public discontent with globalization, and if political pressure builds as midterm elections draw near, fast track may yet go down to defeat.

Even if Bush finally gets his trade promotion authority, he may have little chance to use it, since the prospects for a new WTO agreement or a Free Trade Area for the Americas (FTAA) look dim. Trade tensions are rising between the United States and Europe, as well as with other industrial countries, in

part over Bush's decision to impose temporary tariffs on steel. Within the Americas, the collapse of Argentina looms ominously; Mexico has gotten little out of President Vicente Fox's bonding with Bush; Venezuela's Hugo Chavez is smarting over administration enthusiasm for the attempted coup against him; and Brazil—where the Workers Party's Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva leads in the presidential race—is upset with what it sees as U.S. protectionism in steel and agriculture.

Developing countries also are growing resentful toward rich nations, especially the United States. They have failed to reap the benefits of trade liberalization and have paid a high price for submitting to the "Washington consensus." The Bush administration's unilateralism and arrogance further undermine the potential for global economic agreement.

At the same time, criticism about the impact of globalization is steadily mounting within the United States. The continued loss of manufacturing jobs—1.2 million in the past year—is more politically charged now that unemployment is growing. Partly spurred by revelations about Enron and the recent moves by companies like Stanley Works to avoid paying taxes by using off-shore financial havens, Democrats—and a few Republicans—are pressing for new legislation on long-neglected corporate abuses.

And contrary to free-marketeer promises, agricultural exports have proven no salvation for farmers. Congress recently passed a farm bill

still skewed to big agribusiness interests that may exceed WTO limits on subsidies, even though total annual payments will remain stable. When even the United States breaks with free trade dogma, argues Neil Ritchie of the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, it simply confirms that agriculture never did fit in the one-size-fits-all model of trade liberalization.

From a global perspective, the United States has lost credibility as a proponent of free trade. "If the United States tries to get on a high horse and says, 'You've got to reduce subsidies,' [the new farm bill] makes it that much harder," argues Dean Baker of the Center for Economic and Policy Research. Bush's steel tariff especially irked the global business elite because "it was a victory for labor," Baker suggests. "I think there's a real fear on the part of the free trade segment of the business elite that things are slipping away."

Yet the United States is responding to real problems that partly result from being everybody's favorite marketplace. Baker argues—as the *Financial Times* also did recently—that rising trade deficits are creating a growing net indebtedness that is unsustainable and will inevitably result in a decline in the value of the dollar, which could lead to a global crisis.

From a global perspective, the United States has lost credibility as a proponent of free trade.

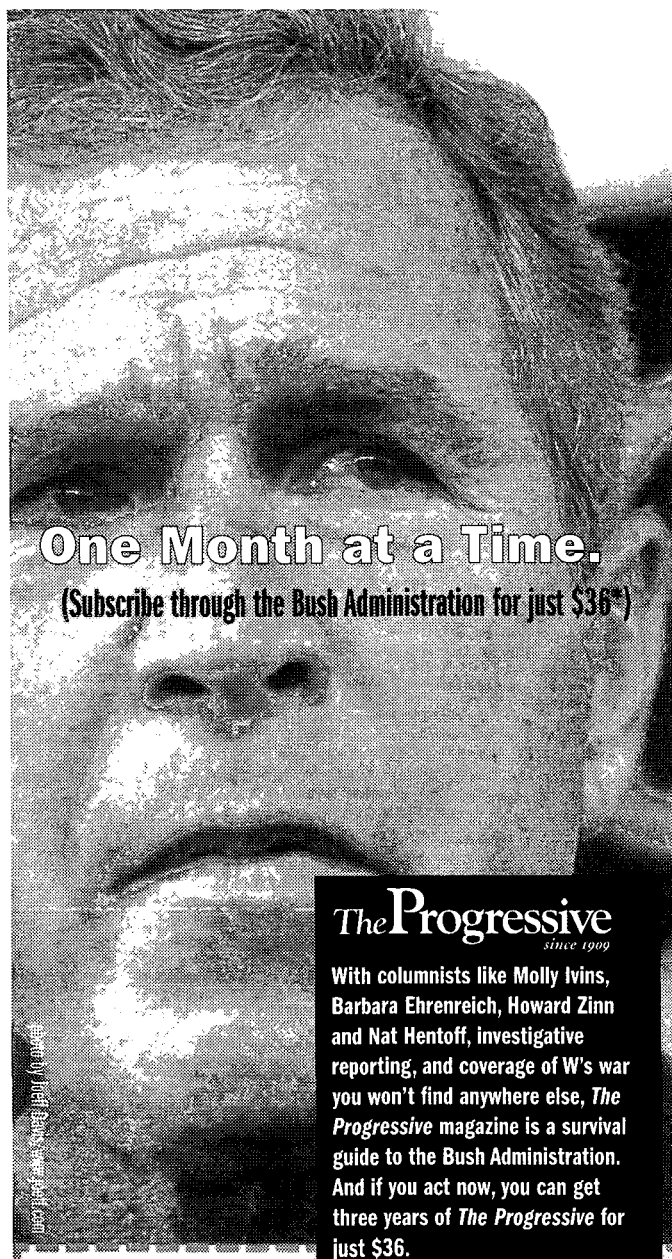
The profound problems of most developing countries are not likely to be solved simply by exporting more to the United States. Oxfam, the global anti-poverty group, recently stirred controversy by arguing that rich country trade barriers to agriculture and textile exports were one of the major causes of world poverty. But Baker cites a recent World Bank analysis that eliminating all barriers to textile and agricultural exports would only raise the gross domestic product of developing nations by 1 percent by 2015—another \$5 to \$10 per person annually in many countries. Also, export agriculture often wreaks environmental devastation and turns small producers into landless rural workers. Export agriculture strategies often create gluts and price collapses, like currently with coffee, leading to deeper rural impoverishment.

In the meantime, “structural adjustment” policies imposed on poor developing countries by the International Monetary Fund have worsened conditions, according to a new review by the Structural Adjustment Participatory Review International Network (SAPRIN), a joint project of citizen groups and the World Bank (see “Deaf Ears,” page 5). The report concludes that, taken together, trade and financial liberalization, privatization and labor “flexibility” reforms “have contributed to the further impoverishment and marginalization of local populations, while increasing economic inequality.”

A new World Bank report also concludes that its own initiative to help heavily indebted poor countries is failing: Very few countries at or near the completion of the program are likely to reduce their debts to “sustainable” levels. No wonder that the World Development Movement reports that last year IMF policies fomented 77 episodes of social unrest in 23 countries. Now a broad coalition is campaigning to prevent using renewed U.S. funding for the World Bank’s International Development Association for loans that harm the environment, undermine labor rights or recklessly privatize services.

The rising tide of discontent focuses as much on multinational corporations as on governments and international organizations, with protesters from both rich and poor countries often converging. Anti-sweatshop campaigns continue to score victories on many fronts. In the courts, a suit against big clothing companies for violations in the U.S. territory of Saipan is progressing; and a 1998 civil lawsuit charging Nike with willfully misleading the public about how its products are made recently received the green light from the California Supreme Court. This spring, shareholder activists demanded that Exxon-Mobil respect human rights and stop fighting efforts to reduce global warming. In May, union pensioners won a remarkable 31 percent of shareholder votes for their resolution to require Unocal, the largest U.S. investor in Burma, to abide by the ILO’s fundamental rights at work.

Despite the growing conflict among rich countries, well-justified dissatisfaction in poor countries, and demands for a different model of globalization, corporate globalizers are pressing forward. Recently leaked documents revealed a new European initiative to open up government services, such as water, transport, health care and communication to corporate competition. A bonanza for multinational corporations (like Enron, previously a key promoter), this privatization of public services threatens citizens in both rich and poor countries. Even as the failure of corporate globalization becomes more apparent and harder to manage, the drive to expand its scope continues. ■



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By Salim Muwakkil

Has Rep. Cynthia McKinney been vindicated? On a Berkeley radio station in March, the Georgia Democrat called for a congressional investigation of the Bush administration, asking, "What did this administration know, and when did it know it?"

"What do they have to hide?" she asked KPFA's Dennis Bernstein in that March 25 interview. "We know there were numerous warnings of the events to come on September 11." The congresswoman was widely vilified in the national media for such statements. But in light of information that the White House had been repeatedly warned of terrorist threats before 9/11, McKinney's questions have become among the most asked questions in the nation.

A May 15 report on CBS revealed that the president was told months before September 11 that Osama bin Laden's terrorist network might hijack American airplanes. That followed reports that an FBI agent in Phoenix had written a classified memo in July 2001 noting a "strong connection" between al-Qaeda and a group of Middle Eastern aviation students he was probing. This came after accounts that an agent had suspected Zacarias Mossaoui (who was arrested at a Minnesota flight school in August 2001) was planning to fly an airliner into the World Trade Center. Since May 15, further reports have emerged, both domestically and abroad, alleging the administration was well informed of many threats.

Back in March, McKinney also pointed out that people close to the Bush administration were poised to profit from America's new war. She hinted strongly that the administration might be protecting the interests of the Carlyle Group, an

investment firm where the elder George Bush is a board member. McKinney quoted a *Los Angeles Times* report that the Carlyle Group had earned \$237 million selling shares in United Defense Industries after September 11. She also revealed for the first time that the "U.S. government is being sued ... by survivors of the U.S. embassy bombings [in Tanzania and Kenya in 1998] because ... it seems clear that the U.S. had received warnings, but did little to secure and protect the staff at our embassies."

McKinney was giving voice to a view that has gained considerable currency in the foreign press, the underground media and marginal Internet sites—raising questions about the congruence of the war on terrorism with U.S. plans for oil pipelines in Central Asia, the well-documented commercial links between the bin Laden and Bush families, the spate of reports alleging that the administration altered foreign policy for purposes of petroleum. To much of Pacifica's audience, McKinney's comments undoubtedly seemed like a bit of conventional wisdom.

But Juliet Eilperin of the *Washington Post* amplified McKinney's radio conversation for a national audience in an April 12 story. Eilperin's lead zeroed in on the essence of McKinney's argument. "[McKinney] is calling for an investigation into whether President

Nightmares of Reason

Sorting fact from fiction in 9/11 conspiracy theories



Bush and other government officials had advance notice of terrorist attacks on Sept. 11 but did nothing to prevent them. She added that 'persons close to this administration are poised to make huge profits off America's new war.' "

Politicians and pundits tore into McKinney with rhetoric so overheated, one might think she had committed treason. Georgia Sen. Zell Miller, a fellow Democrat, called her statements "very dangerous and irresponsible." Rep. Mark Foley (R-Florida) said, "She has said some outrageous things, but this has gone too far." *National Review* columnist Jonah Goldberg used the opportunity to trash McKinney as "dumber than rock salt and more repugnant than Yasser Arafat's three-week-old underwear." This crude level of discourse was maintained by syndicated columnist Kathleen Parker, who wrote, "McKinney is a dangerous fool whose voice needs to be stifled." Throwing in as many gratuitous insults as possible, Parker added that McKinney is "dragging down the national I.Q."

Mckinney took some heat from the left as well. David Corn, *The Nation's* Washington correspondent, chided her for "peddling unproven conspiracy theories." In a March 1 column, Corn detailed the e-mail he has received alleging government involvement in 9/11. "I won't argue that the U.S. government does not engage in brutal, murderous skullduggery from time to time," he wrote. "But the notion that the U.S. government either detected the attacks but allowed them to occur, or, worse, conspired to kill thousands of Americans to launch a war for oil in Afghanistan is absurd."

He takes special aim at the widely e-mailed theories of Michael Ruppert, a former Los Angeles police officer who gained fame backing up reporter Gary Webb's account of CIA involvement in the crack-cocaine epidemic. Ruppert publishes an anti-CIA Web site (www.copvcia.com), which pushes the notion that the government had foreknowledge of the 9/11 attacks. Corn argues that such conspiratorial tales "compete with reality for attention," "make real transgressions seem tame in comparison," and divert that attention from serious progressive struggle.

Corn certainly is not alone in lamenting that the left has become too attracted to conspiracies. Media critic Norman Solomon also has taken Ruppert to task. He complained of KPFA's "promotion of Michael Ruppert on the air," in a well-publicized letter to Pacifica management. He characterized Ruppert's methods as the "'selective vacuum cleaner approach,' pulling in whatever supports his conclusions while excluding context and perspectives that undermine them."

Ruppert does jump to some sweeping conclusions, but he also raises a number of questions that shouldn't be dismissed. If assessed in conjunction with other sources, Ruppert's site contains a wealth of useful information and reinforces the theory that the Bush administration and its oil-saturated cronies have used the war on terrorism as a pretext to gain access to and control of Central Asia's fossil fuel reserves.



numerous warnings of events to come on September 11."

—Rep. Cynthia McKinney

Ruppert too has been featured on KPFA and claims to work closely with McKinney. Although the five-term congresswoman has never confirmed such a relationship, she has credited him with providing her important information. McKinney doesn't argue that Bush abetted mass murder for profit (and neither does Ruppert), but rather that his values were so distorted by commercial interests, he may have failed to exercise prudence proper to issues of national security.

"What do they have to hide? ... We know there were

Historically, conspiracist thinking has been more central to the narrative of the far right, says Chip Berlet of Political Research Associates. Such conspiracism "assigns tiny cabals of evildoers a superhuman power to control events, frames social conflict as part of a transcendent struggle

between Good and Evil, and makes leaps of logic, such as guilt by association, in analyzing evidence."

In recent years, however, the left has become increasingly attracted to the narrative of conspiracy. The 9/11 attacks sparked such widespread conspiracist speculation that Political Research Associates began collecting examples to compile on its Web site (www.publiceye.org). By cataloging these theories and their pedigree, Berlet hopes to help progressives better assess their credibility. Obsessions with conspiracies divert resources and focus from the kind of efforts that can expose actual conspiracies through careful and rigorous research, he argues. Berlet urges progressives to be wary of explanations that blame world problems on demonized scapegoats. "Every major traumatic event in U.S. history generates a new round of speculation about conspiracies," he says. "The attacks on 9/11 are no exception."

All good conspiracy theories contain truthful elements. The problem, of course, is distinguishing fact from fancy. While conspiracists often reach implausible conclusions, their research sometimes uncovers facts that are indisputable.

Investigating McKinney's claims has revealed information that seems to support her misgivings. In addition to the highly publicized revelations on the number of domestic and international warnings received by the Bush administration, there is also the ironic, tragic saga of John O'Neill, which is recounted in the French book *Bin Laden: The Forbidden Truth* by intelligence analyst Jean-Charles Brisard and journalist Guillaume Dasquié, the editor of *Intelligence Online*. (The book is scheduled to be published in English in July).

O'Neill was the FBI's top bin Laden hunter in charge of the investigations into the al-Qaeda connections to the 1993 bombing at the World Trade Center, the bombing of the American troop barracks in Saudi Arabia in 1996, the African embassy bombings in 1998, and the attack on the U.S.S. *Cole* in 2000. Brisard and Dasquié claim O'Neill quit the agency in protest two weeks before September 11 because his investigation had been hindered by the Bush administration's connections to the Taliban and by the interests of American oil companies. His next job was as head of security for the World Trade Center. O'Neill was killed on September 11 trying to rescue people trapped in the towers.

The book—which is competing for Paris shelf space with conspiracist texts that argue the Pentagon was never struck by a plane—goes on to allege that just five weeks before the September attacks, the Bush administration was bargaining with the Taliban over a Central Asian oil pipeline and the capture of bin Laden. The authors also see a link between those negotiations and Vice President Dick Cheney's energy policy task force, with its conclusions that Central Asian oil has become critical to the U.S. economy. Their contention that the Bush administration is fixated on fossil fuel above all else is supported by many other sources. Pakistani journalist Ahmed Rashid's best seller, *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, carefully chronicles how oil politics directed U.S. policy in Afghanistan. The nearby Caspian Sea Basin is reputed to contain the largest source of untapped fossil fuels on the planet.

Mckinney's comment about increased profit margins for friends of the Bush administration also has been backed up. A two-part series in the Hong Kong-based *Asia Times* in January noted that the United States is developing "a network of multiple Caspian pipelines," and that people close to the Bush administration stand to benefit. The law firm Baker & Botts represents the pipeline consortium set to build the proposed Baku-Ceyhan pipeline that would link Azerbaijan to Turkey via Georgia. The firm's principle attorney is James Baker, former secretary of state and chief spokesman for the Bush campaign during the Florida vote controversy.

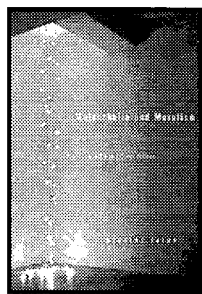
And none other than the disgraced Enron Corp.—once one of Bush's biggest financial backers—conducted a feasibility study for

the \$2.5 billion Trans-Caspian pipeline being built under a joint venture between Turkmenistan, Bechtel and General Electric. "Enron, together with Amoco, Chevron, Mobil, Unocal and British Petroleum, were all spending billions of dollars to pump the reserves of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan," the *Asia Times* reported, adding that Baker, former National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft, former presidential Chief of Staff John Sununu and Vice President Dick Cheney "have all closed major deals directly and indirectly on behalf of the oil companies."

And current National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice served on Chevron's board of directors for nearly 10 years before being scooped up by the Bush administration. Chevron (now Chevron Texaco) is the largest shareholder in the Caspian Pipeline Consortium, the group that completed an oil pipeline from Kazakhstan to the Black Sea port of Novorossiysk, Russia, and is planning more pipelines in the region.

It certainly can be argued that the economic benefits for close Bush associates are only indirectly attributable to the war on terrorism. But consider the argument of Uri Averbach, a former member of the Israeli Knesset, noted peace activist and keen international observer. "If one looks at the map of the big American bases created for the war," Averbach wrote in the Israeli newspaper *Ma'ariv* in February, "one is struck by the fact that they are completely identical to the route of the projected oil pipeline to the Indian Ocean."

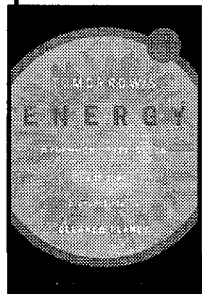
Deployments of U.S. troops do largely coincide with existing and projected pipeline routes. The United States already has troops in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Georgia and Afghanistan; Bush reportedly is negotiating to place U.S. forces in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Armenia and Azerbaijan.



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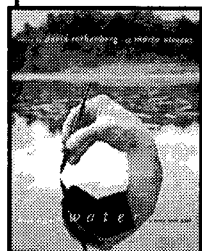


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The ham-handed activities of the Bush administration also make it more difficult to discount the conspiracy theories. Attorney General John Ashcroft's attack on the Bill of Rights and increasing use of government secrecy simply adds more fuel to the fires of suspicion. "There were adequate warnings," McKinney insisted on KPFA. "And that's what ought to be investigated. But instead of requesting that Congress investigate what went wrong and why, we had President Bush placing a call to Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle asking him not to investigate."

But now Daschle and House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt both are calling for a thorough, public investigation into events surrounding the attack. In addition, Florida Democrat Bob Graham, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, is complaining that the Justice Department and CIA are not fully cooperating with the congressional investigation into how the terrorists escaped detection. What's more, the Senate governmental affairs committee has voted to issue subpoenas to end the Bush administration's stonewalling on the request for records about its connection to Enron.

McKinney has issued a statement saying, in effect, I told you so. "I was derided by the White House, right-wing talk radio, and spokespersons for the military-industrial complex as a conspiracy theorist," she says. "Even my patriotism was questioned because I dared to suggest that Congress should conduct a full and complete investigation into the most disastrous intelligence failure in American history." But now, she gloats, "It becomes clear why the Bush administration has been vigorously opposing congressional hearings ... it has been engaged in a conspiracy of silence."

Although McKinney was thoroughly denounced by political and media elites, a poll conducted by the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* found that 48 percent of those responding agreed with her call for a probe. That support surprised many but echoes what many other observers have noted: There is less public support for the Bush administration's conduct in the war on terrorism than is widely assumed.

Despite continued disclosures of intelligence failures and the administration's inability to "connect the dots," the White House remains opposed to any kind of full-scale investigation. In an appearance before the faithful of the New York Conservative Party, the vice president played the patriotism card against his critics. "They need to be very cautious not to seek political advantage by making incendiary suggestions ... that the White House had advance information that would have prevented the tragic attacks of 9/11," Cheney said. "Such commentary is thoroughly irresponsible and totally unworthy of national leaders in a time of war."

But only the Bush administration can determine how long we will remain in this "time of war." The war has been a pretext for many items in the wish list of Bush's core constituents on the conservative and corporate right: limiting the protections of the Bill of Rights; making Central Asia safe for corporations seeking access to the region's vast natural resources; extending American power and influence into the spheres of rivals China and Russia; and preparing the way for the destabilization of Iran and an invasion of Iraq.

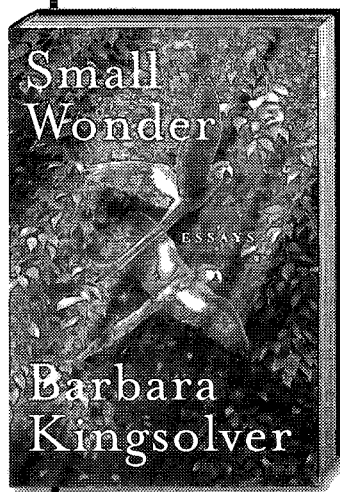
The left may gain some tactical points for joining the criticism of the Bush administration's intelligence failures. But there is some irony in a left critique that derides the Bush administration for not adopting even more draconian surveillance methods. Instead, the left should take McKinney's suggestion and follow the money. When found, that money is likely to be drenched in oil and politically flammable. ■

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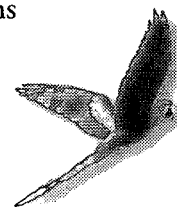
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Pim's Misfortune

Only in death did this Dutch dandy become a darling of American conservatives

By Doug Ireland

Pim Fortuyn, who shook all Europe from beyond the grave in the Dutch elections on May 15, was assassinated by an animal rights guerrilla extremist just days before the vote. A wave of revulsion at his killing swept the Low Country (many Dutch voters, egged on by Pim's acolytes, blamed the murder on the left), and his "List Pim Fortuyn" (LPF), cobbled together out of nothing just three months earlier, became the second-largest formation in parliament—in the process handing a crushing defeat to the governing socialists of the Dutch Labor Party, who lost half their seats after eight years in power.

Fortuyn was widely regarded in Europe as the latest in a series of political threats to democratic values. So why did this shaven-headed, openly gay dandy from a tiny country become a hero to a wide swath of American conservative and neoconservative intellectuals?

In the United States, in the weeks before and after Fortuyn's killing, a raft of conservative commentators not previously marked by sympathy for out of the closet gays—the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page, *The Weekly Standard*, Marvin Olasky (the ex-Communist inventor of Dubya's "compassionate conservatism") and Mickey Kaus, to name a few—and gay conservatives like Andrew Sullivan and the Independent Gay Forum, all lionized the flamboyant Dutchman. They flayed their favorite target, the "liberal media," for having categorized Fortuyn as part of the mushrooming European "extreme right."

Reading these ravings, one would come away with the impression that Fortuyn was no dangerous race-baiter, but some sort of libertarian saint who reasonably defended western civilization against the onslaught of fanatical wogs.

So what was Fortuyn really all about, and what was his appeal?

A former Marxist sociologist turned Catholic, Fortuyn was an insidiously ambitious, megalomaniacal political actor who invented a political persona that surfed on rising alienation, fear and racism (even his name, Fortuyn, was a pseudonym of his own invention). After winning notoriety as a savagely iconoclastic, left-bashing columnist for a large-circulation conservative Dutch magazine—which brought frequent appearances on TV chat shows—Fortuyn embarked on a political career.

He knocked at the door of a number of traditional political parties—the Christian Democrats, the free-market "liberals" (meaning "conservatives" in European parlance), and even the Labor Party—which all refused to anoint him to the exalted place he dreamed of. He finally succeeded in being named to head the ticket of the Livable Netherlands Party—an ultraconservative, law-and-order formation—in Rotterdam's municipal elections, which made him a household name when he drubbed the incumbent administration in that traditional left stronghold earlier this year. But the Livable Netherlands Party soon expelled him for inciting racial hatred against the Netherlands' sizable Muslim immigrant population—which is when Fortuyn launched his own ticket, the LPF, to contest the national parliamentary elections.

The various European parties and political leaders that have come to be labeled "extreme right" in political shorthand are, of course, varied in their origins and postures. Jean Marie Le Pen and his National Front are the linear descendants of French prewar fascism and Vichy collaboration. Gianfranco Fini's "post-fascist" National Alliance was built on the remains of the Italian Social Movement (MSI), founded by former stalwarts of Mussolini, and has taken pains to undergo a modernizing facelift (although it was only this year that the Alliance finally removed the fascist symbols from the party's emblem). Hitler-loving Jörg Haider's Freedom Party was built from a core of sympathizers and nostalgics of Austrian Nazism.

Fortuyn was a modern, media-savvy demagogue who publicly eschewed fascism and anti-Semitism—and was all the more dangerous for that reason. His understanding of politics as theater, in which he accentuated his eccentricities as a base to launch his appealing, simplistic slogans ("Holland is full"), contrasted to his advantage with the gray landscape of Dutch consensus politics. But his American defenders overlook that he shared with the classic neofascists a bitter contempt for parliamentary democracy.

A photo of slain Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn lies amid flowers outside his house in Rotterdam. Written underneath the photo: "You said what we think."



As the Dutch expert on the extreme right, Jos Van Der Velpen, author of three books on the subject, points out, Fortuyn "was not a democrat" and "incarnated a conception of the state in which parties have no place ... detested parties to the point of proclaiming that, once elected, he'd waste no time in parliament ... and saw himself as a 'savior' embodying the will of the 'real nation' dear to [Charles] Maurras [the intellectual godfather of pre-war French clerical fascism]." Fortuyn promised to expand the army (as if the Dutch were threatened by foreign foes) and to hand police powers and functions over to the military.

Fortuyn was smart enough to select a mixed-race Cape Verdean as No. 2 on the LPF ticket and feature him in campaign TV spots (of course, even Le Pen prominently displays a token Arab among the National Front's elected officials); and he used his own homosexuality to tap-dance away from the racist label ("I don't hate Arab men—I even sleep with them," Pim proclaimed.) But he also wanted to eliminate the Dutch constitution's protections against discrimination and deport many Islamic immigrants. And like Le Pen, Pim blamed Muslims for everything from crime to the decrepit condition of the nation's rail system and waiting lists for health care.

As to the hosannas for him from the stateside right, the gay writer Michelangelo Signorile got it right when he suggested in a *New York Press* column that American "conservatives' interest in legitimizing Fortuyn ... is in the service of elevating the entire issue of regulating and barring Arabs and Muslims, and perhaps even rounding up such people here. When the dirty bomb goes off, this is the repressive direction conservative pundits are going to go. ... Fortuyn is their dress rehearsal."

The political upset scored by Fortuyn's list also owes much to deepening continent-wide alienation from the federal Europe now being constructed by the European Union. Like Le Pen and Fini, Fortuyn denounced the "faceless bureaucrats of Brussels" (home to E.U. headquarters) and their maze of "oppressive" regulations. But the "rose wave" of social-democratic governments that dominated Europe in the '90s also made the European Union one of the world's most significant defenders of human rights (not insignificantly, those of gays prominent among them). Fortuyn wanted to dissolve the European Parliament, abrogate the Treaty of Schengen (which made the Eurozone possible by opening borders to E.U. goods and citizens), and retreat behind the Dutch frontiers—a prescription for economic disaster.

One of the most effective ways to fight the rise of the extreme right would be to democratize the European Union. That's one reason why Daniel Cohn-Bendit, president of the Green caucus in the European Parliament, has proposed direct election of the commissioners who run the union (currently appointed in backroom political deals). Unless ordinary Europeans begin to sense that they have a say in E.U. governance, this issue will continue to fuel extremist, anti-democratic sentiments.

No less a savvy observer than the ultraconservative Edmund Stoiber, the Christian Democratic candidate for German chancellor in this fall's elections who has never allowed himself to be outflanked to his right, warned a week after the LPF victory that "we could be soon faced with the danger of a [German] Pim Fortuyn."

Fortuyn was the first of a new type of extremist demagogue. He undoubtedly will not be the last. ■



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Shunned by Society

Ghana has avoided the worst of the African AIDS crisis. But that hasn't bettered the miserable existence of those with the disease.

By G. Pascal Zachary

ACCRA, GHANA

Dinah and a dozen others stand on the sun-baked ground outside of the "fevers unit," a ramshackle building that is part of this West African city's main hospital. The unit is where people infected with HIV go for treatment.

On this Thursday morning, traditional healers are selling home-made "bitters" that reputedly strengthen the immune system. Dinah has no money to purchase the medicine and tries to persuade one of the healers to part with his potions for no charge. Her frail body, thinned by her illness, seems to wilt in the sun.

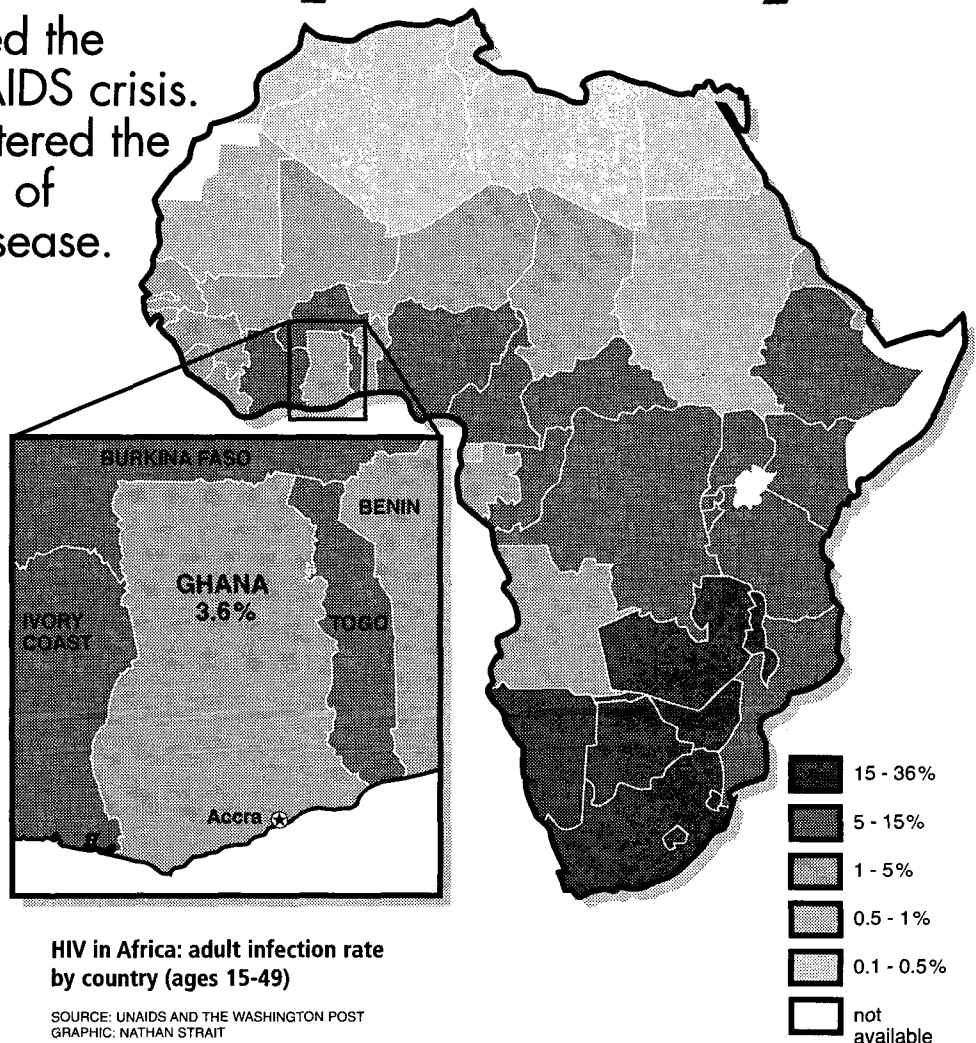
A television reporter takes in the scene, her camera lingering on Dinah's delicate face. "I beg you," Dinah tells the reporter. "Stop, stop."

The camera stays on her face, and Dinah begins to cry. Fat tears roll down her gaunt cheeks. She hides her face in her hands, sobbing quietly.

Dinah is 26. She learned that she had HIV 17 months ago when her baby daughter died of AIDS. She has no job, and of her friends and family, only her mother knows that she is sick. She fears the backlash if anyone else learns of her HIV status.

A man rushes out of the fevers unit and wedges his body between the camera and Dinah. "We told you to respect the privacy of these people," the man shouts at the reporter. She quickly apologizes, and promises not to air the footage of Dinah or anyone else.

The man, Bradford Yeboah, shakes his head. "We want to draw attention to the plight of people with AIDS, but our privacy must be respected," he says. Yeboah is the leader of the Wisdom Association, the chief group in Ghana representing people living with AIDS. Dinah, who asked that her last name not be used, is one of its members.



In Ghana, the AIDS story is brighter than in most other places in sub-Saharan Africa. The estimated rate of HIV infection in Ghana is around 3.6 percent, one of the lowest in English-speaking Africa. In South Africa and Botswana, the HIV rate is as high as 10 times Ghana's. Even in its immediate neighbors, Togo and Ivory Coast, the rate is about three times Ghana's. "No one knows why the epidemic is milder in Ghana," says Dr. Kwaku Yeboah (no relation to Bradford), director of the Ghana's National AIDS Control Program.

Social policies may be crucial in explaining the differences. The first AIDS case in Ghana was reported in 1986. In the late '90s, Ghana saw a rise in HIV infections, and an AIDS explosion seemed likely. "We saw what happened in other African countries and concluded it could happen to us," Dr. Yeboah says.

By 2000, there were 350,000 people in Ghana infected with HIV; 150,000 had died since the start of the epidemic. In response, the country put together a wide-ranging campaign to promote condom use (accompanied by the jingle "If it's not on, it's not in"), less promiscuous sexual activity, HIV testing and a frank recognition that AIDS posed the single greatest peril to this nation of 19 million people. Foreign donors funded a television soap opera that dramatized AIDS themes. The U.S. government gave Ghana millions of free condoms. And not only were high-risk sex workers and truck drivers targets of the campaign, but the general Ghanaian public as well. The nationwide HIV infection rate, which peaked at 4.6 percent in the late '90s, declined to 3 percent by last year (although in two regions of the country, those nearest Togo, the rate was about 5 percent).

The numbers seem to tell a success story. But to suffer from AIDS in Africa remains a lonely experience. On the day Dinah breaks into tears over the inquiring camera, she worries about how she will keep a roof over her head. She lives with her mother in a single room in a house owned by her grandmother. Her grandmother suspects Dinah is ill and wants to kick her out of the house.

Sitting with Dinah in her room one April afternoon, her mother, Janet, explains why it is too risky to tell anyone else about her daughter's disease. "The sickness is a disgrace to our family," she says, "so if the family knows they will cut us off."

In Ghana, the target of a backlash isn't limited to the person with AIDS. Relatives and children can be shunned too. "When the media show someone on TV with AIDS, they can be evicted before they return home," says Gladstone Attipoe, one of Dinah's friends and an activist in the Wisdom Association.

Dinah's mother, Janet, knows the risks of associating with a person with AIDS. But she won't abandon her daughter—even though caring for her has forced Janet to give up her trade as a fish peddler. "I feel her bones are my bones," she says. "I have to sacrifice for her."

To raise money, Janet has sold her nicest clothes and most of her jewelry. On this day, she wears a faded T-shirt, a frayed gray skirt and plastic flip-flops. She keeps her dwindling savings rolled up in a soiled handkerchief. When Dinah sees the contents—the equivalent of 50 cents—she shudders. "I am to blame for her sorry state," she says.

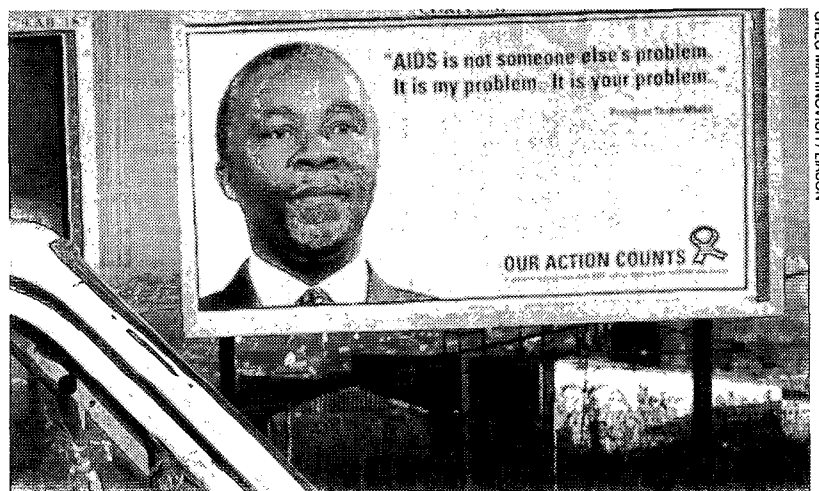
With her grandmother threatening to force Dinah onto the street, she turns to Attipoe of the Wisdom Association for help. Attipoe finds her a rare place in a Catholic charity shelter in the port city of Tema, about 20 miles from Accra. But before she can leave for her new home, Dinah gets dizzy one morning soon after Easter and passes out. Her mother brings her by taxi to the fevers unit, where she is given a bed in a room with another woman with HIV. Dinah is a skeleton, skin stretched over bones. She receives no treatment.

None of the standard treatments for fighting AIDS—anti-retroviral therapy, for instance—are provided in Ghana. The reason is cost. The government has yet to endorse the use of these treatments because, even at discount prices offered by Western pharmaceutical companies, the treatments are too

expensive. An Indian drug company did begin selling an illegal copy of an anti-retroviral drug here last year, but the government halted the sale when the global pharmaceutical kings objected.

"We only treat the symptoms, not the disease," says Dinah's nurse, who has dispensed Imodium to her in order to reduce her diarrhea, but otherwise gives her no other treatment or information. "We don't have the funds" for AIDS therapies, she says. So Dinah must simply endure. The hospital lacks even the resources to measure Dinah's T-cell count or run other tests that might indicate the state of her immune defenses—and whether she has full-blown AIDS.

Usually the AIDS patients admitted to the hospital come, like Dinah, for short stays—or they die. Often, "they come when they are too sick for us to help them," the nurse says.



Ghana avoided the AIDS explosion that plagued places such as South Africa.

On the morning that Dinah arrives, one patient dies in her bed. The unit has only nine other beds. The nurse gives Dinah fluids intravenously and the Imodium pills. Dinah grumbles that the nurse insisted on her mother purchasing the pills from the pharmacy. She gripes that the nurse is always importuning her for money, even though she is clearly poor. Hospital officials say that the poor can receive care without charge, but Dinah protests that doctors and nurses won't treat her until she pays.

Dinah is thinner than ever, and she is scared that her grandmother may find out what's happened. A friend stands near her bed and embraces her. The friend also has HIV. "I am not afraid to touch her," the friend says, telling Dinah, "Don't be frightened to tell your people. Maybe they will help you."

After two days, Dinah leaves the hospital, her strength returned. She dare not stay longer, fearing she will lose the bed waiting for her in the shelter.

Her new bed is in a dormitory with other women, some of whom are not ill with AIDS, but nevertheless have been abandoned. Dinah is fed, accepted by her roommates, and no longer fears living her last months and weeks on the derelict streets of Accra.

Dinah's is a small victory in a story in which relentless disease weighs against African society. Her mother has returned to her village in the countryside. Dinah is lonely but relieved. "I don't wish for her to see me die," she says. "I have hurt her enough."

GREG MARINOVICH / LANSO

Information, Please

By Paul McLeary

See if this sounds familiar: You're on the couch, desultorily flipping the channels, seemingly engaged for 10 minutes here, five minutes there, with shows that actually seem to pique your interest. The only trouble is, when they cut to commercial and you cut to another channel, you end up forgetting the pro-

Media Unlimited: How the Torrent of Images and Sounds Overwhelms Our Lives

By Todd Gitlin
Metropolitan Books
260 pages, \$25

gram you just mentally noted to come back to. It's only later you realize that if asked, you couldn't describe, or even recall, anything you just watched.

It's a strange and somewhat unnerving feeling to hardly recollect how you spent an evening, yet there seems to be something about our contemporary media that defies long-term memory. If it's any consolation, rest assured that you're not alone. Is it mere hubris (or perhaps a sign of moral bankruptcy?) that leads to our consent to quicker, cheaper and less-demanding modes of entertainment, or is it something intrinsic to Western, liberal cosmopolitan culture that keeps us always in search of the newest content provider to stream information into increasingly harried lives?

In his newest book, *Media Unlimited*, sociologist Todd Gitlin holds the latter view, arguing that these "nonstop mass-produced images and sounds are central elements of our civilization," and in such a culture, "there is no choice but to navigate. Sink or swim."

Sounds vaguely like a threat. But is it?

Gitlin makes the argument that what we are experiencing, much like globalization itself, is merely an intensification of processes that have been long at work. In the hyper-specialized realm of American media, controlled by a dwin-

dling number of international megacorporations, content is king only insofar as it is able to move units and sustain a certain level of profitability. Living in a market-driven society, there is nothing surprising or even morally adverse about that, but in the desiderata of our day-to-day lives, this shouting cavalcade has led to uninspired, unfulfilling media that live in such close proximity to us that we barely realize we're experiencing it anymore.

While cultural critics bemoan the media's dumbing-down of the citizenry, Gitlin takes a bit more studied approach to the subject. Though he agrees that "broadcast dissemination does not discriminate well between the trivial and the momentous"—and thus we become obsessed with the O.J. Simpson trial while ignoring

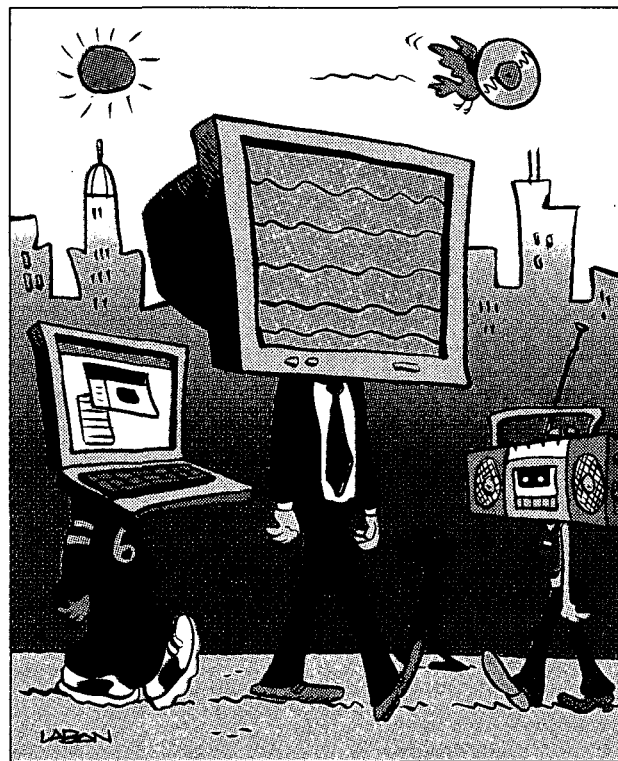
war German social theorist Jürgen Habermas, in his seminal work *The Social Transformation of the Public Sphere*, outlines the beginnings of this process. Expanding cross-border trade during the late Middle Ages and Renaissance led to the rise of a proto-middle class, which in turn precipitated an increase in social clubs and business associations. Seeking to spread useful information among their members, trade newsletters were born, which eventually grew to include news from other towns and cities as business expanded.

And so information—and its dissemination—came to be seen as a commodity and a business unto itself. As these publications grew in number and became cheaper to produce, they also became more accessible to the general population. They began to delve into scandal and gossip to cultivate demand as competition increased. Our own digital media have continued along this path, growing and reproducing themselves as

components become cheaper, smaller and more readily available. For Gitlin, talk about the centrality of "mass-produced images" in our culture continues throughout his book, but the crux of this argument doesn't arrive until about halfway through, and most of what comes before winds up reading a bit like filler.

One of the more tedious and frankly unnecessary sections of the book concerns a rather ironically verbose discussion of the number of words and punctuation marks in the first sentences of magazine articles and novels over the past century—including graphs that seem to prove his exercise pointless, since, in many cases, the change is negligible. He proves little more than the fact that language is elastic and tends to change over time.

Why should something written in 1896, or even 1936, read the same as something written in 1996? Should the punctuation be the same? Word count? Of course it shouldn't, and it can't, unless we have stopped living as a culture and no longer discard certain linguistic conventions just as we take on others. Should *Moll Flanders* really have the same linguistic structure as *London Fields*?



things like genocide in Rwanda—Gitlin unfortunately seems to think that we are able only to react to the media, that we are powerless to take a proactive stance.

How did the media come to dominate our lives in such a seemingly effortless and quick manner? Well, according to Gitlin, it was neither effortless nor quick. The post-

What Gitlin spends all this time getting at is an exposition of his categorization system for the ways we respond to the media—which, again, he believes is all we can hope to do. Each of us, he holds, can be categorized in one of seven different ways: fan, critic, ironist, paranoid, jammer, secessionist or abolitionist.

As the media multiply, our connection to the larger world is actually made more narrow and provincial.

The “fan” selectively over-identifies with media icons; the “critic,” on the other hand, “tries to keep a certain distance from the foam to avoid a soaking” but assumes that the world would be a better place if the content were more intellectually stimulating. The “paranoid” is just that, seeing a marketing conspiracy at every turn, exemplified in academia by the Frankfurt School of social criticism. The “exhibitionist” is an eager participant in the media torrent (where would our reality show obsession be without a steady supply of these?) while the “ironist” is “confident that the spectacle is nothing but weightless contrivances.”

The “jammer” uses the media’s images against them, which is what the cyber-punk literary movement of the ’80s and early ’90s attempted, with varying degrees of success. The “secessionist” is one who eschews e-mail and cell phones and tries to plug her ears to the bombardment of sounds and images, while the “abolitionist” finds meaning in trying to bring the system down, like some anarchists in the anti-globalization movement.

An interesting take overall, but Gitlin fails to recognize the obvious—that each of us is a little bit of all of these categories rolled into one. We are complex animals who respond to situations in different and often surprising ways. As a sports fan, I admit that I probably over-identify with my favorite baseball team just as much as I am paranoid about marketing tactics trying to get me to think or feel a certain way. Each of us has abolitionist tendencies and probably has personally boycotted certain products for ideological reasons, just as we all might yearn for the little thrill we

receive when our name is in print, satisfying certain exhibitionist proclivities.

What Gitlin ignores—purposefully, it seems—is the wider social ramifications of some of our newest media outlets. As Cass Sunstein points out in his slim but excellent book *Republic.com*, our media, while providing us with a thin conception of cultural assimilation, estrange us from one another in a very real way. Sunstein focuses his account on the Internet, so is therefore more limited in scope than Gitlin’s effort, but his ideas translate to our media culture in general. As the range of media choices grows, we find little niches in which we are most comfortable and tend to stay there.

Pro-life activists, for example, read certain Web sites and participate in online chat forums where they speak to people who feel the same way. They watch conservative talk shows and listen to conservative radio programs, purposefully cutting themselves off from other influences and therefore becoming

more radicalized in their beliefs. While we used to have to rely on unifying common sources for our information, such as the local newspaper or TV newscast, now we can be exposed only to the kind of information we want. Our connection to the larger world, supposedly new media’s grand promise, is actually stunted and made more provincial.

But Gitlin’s point about the “torrent of images and sounds” as an indispensable part of our culture is well made, and it is a point that many theorists tend to ignore in their race to coin snappy terms to describe our lot. To be sure, the media glut has intensified, but just as it grows, so too does our ability to sort and digest large amounts of information quickly. Where Gitlin falters, however, is in failing to offer an overview of just how that process works. He teases the reader constantly with this possibility throughout the book, but in the end, his simplistic “styles of navigation” argument adds precious little to the dialogue concerning the media’s role in our culture. ■

Great and Small

By Heather Hewett

Jamaica Kincaid was the first writer who made me feel O.K. about hating my mother. Kincaid’s full-grown, razor-sharp rage gave me a sense of relief, for my own short-lived, adolescent frustrations paled in comparison. In much of her nonfiction and fiction, Kincaid has charted the tempestuous and treacherous waters of

its contours are beginning to feel a bit too familiar. Her most recent novel, *Mr. Potter*, mines much of the same territory. This time, however, the author charts an alternative course, and her destination feels different, if not completely new.

I should say up front that nothing much happens in this book. It’s a story about a man of “no consequence” to the world, a small man in a small place whose existence might be overlooked by most passersby. But Kincaid’s eye is keen. The portrait she draws of this ordinary, illiterate and flawed man illuminates what should not be forgotten: his humanity.

Mr. Potter
By Jamaica Kincaid
Farrar, Straus and Giroux
144 pages, \$18

the relationship between mothers and daughters. But unlike my own middle-class grumbles, Kincaid had much more to be angry about—the poverty and oppression of her childhood home, Antigua, which has long suffered from the effects of British colonialism and modern tourism.

It’s no wonder that the author returns so frequently to the same terrain, so rich in conflict and so poor in every other way. And yet at times I tire of Kincaid’s journey; she has retold it so many times that

Slowly, the arc of Mr. Potter’s existence unfolds: He has fathered many girls by just as many different women; he drives a taxi; he dies at age 70. Halfway through the first chapter, we learn that his story is being told by one of his daughters. She attempts to gather information about a man who has been forgotten by history and who she does not know. Their connection is almost accidental, for he is only “an empty space with a line drawn

through it" on her birth certificate. She fills in this empty space with her own fleeting memories of the stories her mother has told her: Mr. Potter's mother, a woman "without even so much as despair," walks into the sea; his fisherman

At her best, Jamaica Kincaid composes poetry that deserves to be read aloud.

father despairs of ever catching fish in his nets; Mr. Potter grows up to become a driver for an indifferent doctor who fled war-torn Prague. These vignettes, painted like still-lives on a canvas, are woven together to form the story's tapestry.

In this novel, Kincaid's idiosyncratic style is taken to extremes. The qualities to love about her writing—the rhythmic and measured cadences of her sentences, the alternatively whimsical and Biblical registers of her voice—are equally wonderful here. At her best, Kincaid composes poetry that deserves to be read aloud, and *Mr. Potter* contains beautiful, breathtaking passages. Many of them are suffused with the author's dark irony, such as when, after giving birth, Mr. Potter's mother is described as "lying in a bed made up of very clean, so very, very clean, rags."

Kincaid's hallmark use of repetition serves to further emphasize the futility of the narrator's quest. The narrator knows so little about her father's life that she repeats the few facts she does know, such as his name: "Mr. Potter was my father; my father's name was Roderick Nathaniel Potter." Yet in other places, the repetition feels excessive. By the time Mr. Potter and his employer, Mr. Shoul, have finished exchanging the briefest of words, 10 pages have passed. The conversation, in its entirety, is as follows: "Eh, eh, Mr. Shoul." "Eh, eh, Potter, me ah tell you."

Of course, in those 10 pages, we've been immersed in the interior life of both characters and in the "mind's eye" of their memories—much like the way Virginia Woolf records even the most imperceptible blip of consciousness. But in the process, Kincaid's ponderous prose loses its momentum and threatens to bring an already slow story to a stop. It's a question of degree; sometimes too much of a good thing is really just too much.

As the novel circles around its subject, its true target comes more clearly into view. For *Mr. Potter* is really the story of Elaine Cynthia Potter, the narrator—or perhaps I should say the author, Jamaica Kincaid. In a characteristic move, Kincaid has named her narrator with a version of her own given name (Elaine Potter Richardson). She has also given the narrator's parents the names of her own parents, further blurring the boundary between fiction and autobiography.

Kincaid's purpose is not entirely clear. Is she playing with her audience and our preconceived categories, finding a way to write about her own life in fiction as well as nonfiction? Whatever her intent, it's difficult to separate Kincaid the writer from her fictional narrator. All the observations we might make about one can be made

where none existed, to acknowledge a stranger who was also her father.

It is this last point which makes *Mr. Potter* worth reading. Unlike some of Kincaid's earlier novels, this story does not remain inside the narrator. In *Mr. Potter*, the narrator's furious quest for the father who abandoned her propels her to retrace the lines of his portrait, slowly filling them in. Finally, this process leads her to imagine him as a little boy, Drickie, who was also abandoned by his parents and bereft of love:

Drickie became the opposite of glowing; he grew dull, like something useful made of a precious metal but forgotten on a shelf, he grew dull and ugly, in the way of the forgotten, and this is true: often a thing that is ugly is ugly in itself, and often a thing that is ugly is only a thing that is forgotten, kept from

view and kept from memory, and often a thing that is ugly is not only a definition of beauty itself but also renders beauty as something beyond words or beyond any kind of description.

As a daughter's anger transforms into a writer's vision, the narrator discovers the sorrow of her father's life. Through writing about Mr. Potter, she comes to understand him as both ugly and beautiful. She sees him as the child whose life will remain tragically unfulfilled: "How sad it is never to hear the sound of your own voice again and sadder still never to have had a voice to begin with."

And so, through writing, his "smallness becomes large, his anonymity is stripped away, his silence broken." At the end, the narrator's eulogy exhorts us to consider his forgotten life. Whatever you might call this—acceptance, forgiveness, understanding—the warring factions of the

narrator's past have reached a truce. With the dissipation of her ghosts, she gives us not just one life but two. ■

Heather Hewett is a freelance writer in New York.



about the other. She writes because she is obsessed with the blank space of her past and compelled by her anger; she writes to heal herself. (And if writing serves as therapy, does this make the reader her therapist?) She writes to create a connection

Waves of Liberation

By Ruth Baldwin

The Belgrade radio station B92, named after its FM wavelength, was set up in May 1989 by a group of music enthusiasts and students who simply wanted "to play rock 'n' roll and

Guerrilla Radio: Rock 'n' Roll Radio and Serbia's Underground Resistance
By Matthew Collin
Thunder's Mouth Press/Nation Books
245 pages, \$14.95

tell the truth." The station's inauguration coincided with the rise of Milosevic's seductive brand of nationalism, culminating in his December 1990 landslide victory in the multiparty elections. Matthew Collin, author of a new history of the station, focuses on the young Serbs who watched with disbelief as their country regressed into racial isolation and lawlessness, courageously deciding to remain in Serbia while many of their peers left for Western Europe and America.

Supporting B92 became one way of resisting the "whirlpool which dragged their lives relentlessly downwards into the darkness," Collin writes. The station's playlist tended toward the international (indie rock, hip hop, techno and Seattle grunge), linking Belgrade's youth with the rest of Europe while simultaneously rejecting the nationalism of Serbian "turbofolk." Collin carefully contrasts the station's eclectic programming and subversive news items with the deterioration of the state-run media: "Milosevic belonged to Yugoslavia's first TV generation ... [he] understood how efficiently it could shape public opinion."

B92's independent status was sustained by liberal philanthropists and foreign sponsors such as George Soros' Open Society Institute, but as an editorial safe-

guard, no single donor could contribute more than 20 percent of the station's total funding.

In 1991, with the country on the brink of civil war, a demonstration supporting the freedom of the press became the first uprising against the regime. While many of its staff fought with the police, B92's transmitter was shut down by the state. They were permitted to resume broadcasting on the proviso that only music was aired. Veran Matic, the editor-in-chief, responded by repeatedly playing tracks like "White Riot" by the Clash and "Fight the Power" by Public Enemy. "We were able to say through music what we would have said in the news," recalls Matic. "The listeners understood the code."



B92 kept Belgrade from becoming a radio wasteland.

This was to be the first of many shutdowns over the upcoming decade. As Milosevic led his country into four Balkan wars, B92 became the leading voice of Belgrade's urban underground resistance. Collin first reported on the station as part of a feature on Belgrade's mass street protests in 1996, when he established a close relationship with B92's founders. Through a montage of interviews, Collin reveals how the symbolic importance of B92 far "exceeded its broadcasting power." The station came to represent a "parallel world,

where democracy, human rights and free speech were still respected." By contrast, Belgrade disintegrated into a "city of chaos" where "everything [was] permitted, and nothing [was] permitted." Matic explains: "To be normal meant to be subversive."

Collin's achievement in *Guerrilla Radio* lies in interweaving two opposing themes: the optimism that those involved with B92 derived from their unique brand of music and political counterculture, and the devastating, demoralizing effect the regime had on all who stayed in the country. B92's 1999 "Net Aid" manifesto, aired the same year of NATO's bombing, stated: "When reality doesn't work any more, we move to the virtual world. But the pain is real and it stays with us." Collin articulates young Serbs' personal pain—boredom, frustration and economic hardship—melded with a horror at the crimes being committed in their name. As one young music producer puts it: "The years from twenty to thirty, these are the best years of your life. And they were stolen from me."

In a fine twist of irony, Milosevic's last interview before going to The Hague was with a reporter from B92. Emerging from his luxurious Belgrade residence just hours after the police first attempted to arrest him in 2001, the ousted president declared: "I am not afraid. I expect this story to end in a just manner and for the benefit of our people. ... We are very proud."

Milosevic's story is still being written. By all accounts, his trial is not progressing smoothly. Dusko Doder has written that the "prosecution's bungling has turned what was once touted as a 'water-tight case' into a battle of wits, allowing Milosevic to mount a fifth war—legal and psychological—against the court itself." Collin's vivid and touching account of Belgrade life serves as a timely reminder to all those who may doubt the trial's historic importance. The eventual sentencing of Milosevic would be the most fitting conclusion to this chapter in B92's ongoing story. ■

Strength and Light

By Benjamin Ivry

The Italian pianist Maurizio Pollini, who is being honored by Deutsche Grammophon on his 60th birthday with a 13-disc set of performances, has long been an advocate of music as revolution. Along with colleagues like the

Maurizio Pollini Edition
Maurizio Pollini
Deutsche Grammophon

conductor Claudio Abbado and the late composer Luigi Nono, Pollini has been a stalwart advocate of social consciousness in music, at a time when its crass commercialization is ever more apparent.

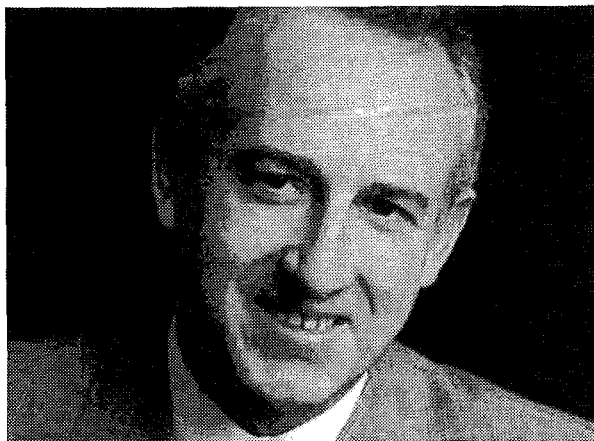
This circle of Italian musical humanists has been as forward-looking in musical as in social matters. Pollini urged Nono to write for the piano, and the result was a modern masterwork, *Como una ola de fuerza y luz* ("Like a wave of strength and light"), which premiered at La Scala in Milan in 1972. The work, included in the present set, is an elegy to Nono's friend Luciano Cruz, a leader of the Chilean MIR movement ("Movement of the Revolutionary Left") who died in 1971 at age 27. The trio of Nono-Abbado-Pollini has been broken by death (Nono's in 1990) and illness (Abbado has been ailing of late), but Pollini marches on as an exemplary musician.

Born in 1942 in Milan, Maurizio Pollini is the son of a noted architect, Gino Pollini, a representative of Italian rationalism as well as an expert violinist. Maurizio's mother, Renata Melotti, studied piano and singing and was the sister of the eminent Italian sculptor Fausto Melotti. Maurizio's father formed a lasting partnership with another architect, Luigi Figini, both aspiring to a humanistic ideal influenced by classical studies and painting.

What did Maurizio learn from these ideal forebears? Both the elder and younger Pollini naturally surrounded themselves with a creative ferment, using all the arts to inspire their own expressivity. The architects Figini and Pollini had an organic view of creation, with

Figini calling his house and workshop a *casa che cresce* ("growing house"), meaning that the house was flexible, growing with the changes in his own family. This kind of organic development would become one of the central virtues of Maurizio Pollini's piano playing, the idea of naturally unfolding music that develops structurally as it expands.

A prodigy who made his debut at age 9, Pollini has preserved some of the ideal qualities of the child musician, the playful and creative elements, a tender freshness and purity. And from his late twenties onward, Pollini's solo recitals became notably mature in artistic outlook. Socialized artistic creation is to some extent a natural Italian habit, but it was no doubt Pollini's sterling personal qualities that drew to him such outstanding talents as composers Luciano Berio and Nono, as well as conductors Abbado and Giuseppe Sinopoli.



Maurizio Pollini

From his 1971 recording debut for Deutsche Grammophon, of Stravinsky's *Petrushka* (a highlight of the present set), it became clear that Pollini had an orchestral concept of the keyboard, a finely honed touch and intense gift for melodic expression. This was no mere cold virtuoso, but a conductor in the making.

Indeed, in 1976 he made his conducting debut with the Orchestra of La Scala, where he showed his fondness for works like Rossini's *La Donna del Lago* in the Italian lyric tradition. His concert reper-

toire grew gradually, with 1985 performances—unfortunately not recorded—of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier* and, in 1993 and afterward, complete Beethoven sonata cycles in various cities. In Salzburg and at Carnegie Hall, he organized concert series mixing old and new music, always with illuminating results, setting his performer's ego aside and sharing the stage with a team of performers.

These human qualities are audible in this majestic set. Among the high points is a convincingly philosophical Beethoven Fourth Concerto (conducted by Abbado) in the tradition of such meditative interpreters as Rudolf Serkin. A disc of Beethoven sonatas is marked by humane, civilized playing, rich with poetry. The sixth disc, of solo Schubert works, offers alternately lyric and operatic playing. The northern thorniness audible in some performances of Schumann's *Fantasy* is changed into extroverted, sunny expression by Pollini, who also offers a convincingly theatrical version of Liszt's B minor Sonata, and a brisk, non-hackneyed rendition of Schumann's familiar "Arabesque."

The final discs are in some ways the most impressive of all. Debussy's rarely recorded *Etudes* are given a performance of delightful humor, while Pollini transforms Arnold Schoenberg's works into radiantly beautiful experiences, much like the work of the Canadian pianist Glenn Gould, who also transfigured this repertoire on record. And like Gould, Pollini renders Webern's exceedingly difficult *Piano Variations*, Op. 27, with freshness and delight.

Pollini's musical genius is at times most fully appreciated in studio recordings—another element in common with the ever-questing mind of Gould. Certainly in playing Nono's works *Como una ola de fuerza y luz* and ... *sofferte onde serene* ... (which appear on disc 12) he captures their essence, of spare desert music for the temptation of a saint, the dark night of the soul for a person of faith. Music of such aching purity creates a true and emotional landscape. ■

Benjamin Ivry is the author of biographies of the composers Ravel (Welcome Rain Press) and Poulenc (Phaidon).

Dive in, the Pool's Empty

By Joshua Rothkopf

Ah, to be young, wild and Californian: *Dogtown and Z-Boys*, an affectionate, free-spirited history of the reinvention of skateboarding in the mid-'70s, from faddish obscurity into a global code of bad-boy arms, has a lot on its agenda. There's enough depth here, solidly anchored to the desperation so often bred in slums, to take

Dogtown and Z-Boys
Directed by Stacy Peralta

its interviewee's claims of urban revolution seriously. But it's the priceless footage of daredevilry—grainy, streaked and all the more kinetic for it—that ultimately persuades: beautiful kids, beneficiaries of that unmistakable West Coast gene for cool, with the breeze in their hair and the need for speed. Never mind Spidey, these are the real wall-climbers.

Dogtown was the audience favorite at last year's Sundance, but don't let that prehipsterized cred turn you off. It's made with great authority; director Stacy Peralta, in his younger years, rode ramps with the best of them and was the movement's shrewdest self-promoter. (In one of his film's funnier asides, Peralta cruises into an episode of *Charlie's Angels*, unwittingly foiling a mustachioed sniper.) The intentionally laconic narration is by Sean Penn, these days a respected actor I hear, but to me forever Jeff Spicoli, in a cloud of pot smoke and surf fantasy, from *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*. All of it feels right, even the jittery edits and other roughed-up visual skidmarks. Peralta may have crafted a love letter to his own youth, but it's still a love letter—a glorious, romantic one at that.

To understand what made these skaters special—and the documentary is ample with its brief histories, including a two-minute crash course on the rise and fall of Venice, an abandoned L.A. funland gone to seed—requires a little background. Apparently skateboarding was a relatively stiff-backed affair upon its debut, practiced by clean-cut youngsters and the occasional regional champion named Woody. It died the sudden death of the yo-yo in 1965, but that didn't stop a scruffier breed from attacking old rollerskates with a saw

and attaching the wheels to pieces of plank. These were the children of blue-collar south Santa Monica, many of them from broken homes, who in the morning surfed the treacherous coastal waves around rusting pylons, then settled into pleasant afternoons of skating shoeless down steep inclines.

Yes, it was a family. Maybe an Osbournes-like family (and Ozzy does wail on *Dogtown's* primo soundtrack of stadium anthems) but a loyal pack nonetheless, bound by risk-taking. The gang gathered around the Zephyr Surf Shop, whose nonconformist owners encouraged their

the Z-Boys (and one Z-Girl) rampaged down the course, crouching and swiveling, tearing up simple slaloms and their innocuous competition. The scene is a magnificent payoff to Peralta's steady build, and you laugh not only at the terror they inspired but the familiarity of the elements they introduced—blue Vans sneakers, unkempt hair, etc.—that are now *de rigueur*. Woody sulked home; salvation had arrived.

The movie splinters apart in its last third, just as the team did, lured away by endorsements, fame and excess. These segments on a few individual showstop-



Jay Adams zig-zags through *Dogtown*.

"Z-Boys" to go for even higher levels of daring and discipline. A final convergence of disasters both natural (a severe drought that emptied sloping backyard pools) and parental (the invention of the urethane wheel, improving traction on all surfaces) made Team Zephyr ready for the Del Mar Nationals in 1975, where only they knew what was about to be wrecked.

Perhaps it's inevitable that *Dogtown* can't top that exhilarating moment, rare to even the most privileged documentarians—the future captured dawning on confused faces. Traditionalists scowled and judges shook their heads as

pers—including Peralta himself—are cheeky enough to engage but shy to comment on the whiff of money in the air. It's a slight disappointment after so much fuck-you recklessness. (Jay Adams, the team's youngest golden boy and most naturally gifted, is a particularly sad casualty; you wince at the scar on his grown-up forehead and the quiet disclosure of his incarceration for drug-related crimes.)

Peralta is content to close on the giddy verges of aerial escape, ever higher over the lip of the pool, before such exploits were safely branded X-Treme. Call him a timid social critic; he spent all his guts up there on the screen. ■

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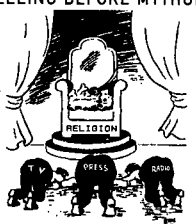
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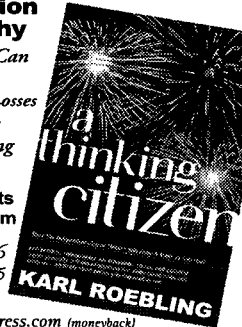
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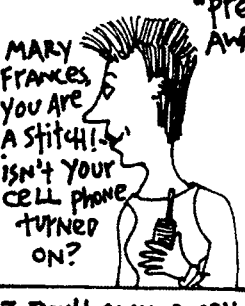
My Friends are into "instant messaging" their computers alert them if a friend comes on-line...OR something like that.



I HAVE AN IMAGINARY computer, just like the IMAGINARY friend I HAD AS A CHILD. My friends don't know my secret.

5-29

they tell me instant messaging is the first of the new technologies called "presence awareness."



MARY FRANCES, you are a stitch! isn't your cell phone turned on?


I DON'T OWN A CELL PHONE... I lie about it.

the tip of the ice-berg

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Photograph by Eugene Richards



motherjones.com

By Scott Williams



World Wealthholder Fund
1,000,000 K Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20005



June 24, 2002

Dear Friend:

If you follow the news, you are already aware that the world is losing its billionaires at an alarming rate. In the past year alone, the number has dwindled from 580 to 497, the biggest decline in well over a decade. Unless we can count on your immediate support, the billionaire could face extinction.

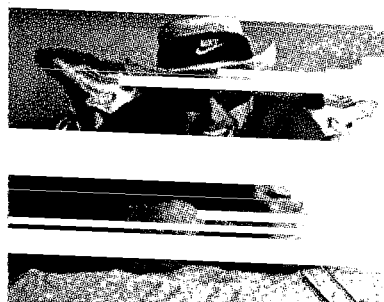
Let me put this crisis in perspective for you. Let's look at Bengal tigers—the world's leading so-called "endangered" species. But there are about 5,000 Bengal tigers in the world today, compared with fewer than 500 billionaires. And let's face it, these Bengal tigers do nothing but skulk around all day in the jungles of India and Bangladesh, whereas our 497 billionaires have busily inherited or accumulated \$1.54 trillion in total net worth. That's enough to subsidize the GDP of India and Bangladesh for two years, with plenty left over to buy the Cincinnati Bengals and the Detroit Tigers. Who's really worth saving here?

Many of you reading this letter spent the past 20 years demanding that rivers must flow to save snail-darters, and that trees must grow to save the spotted owl. And yet some of you would slash and burn the natural habitat of the very rich—the deregulated global economy! Look at the photo I've enclosed of poor Phil Knight. Where would he be if Nike's exploitation of workers was somehow limited?

Some of you may prefer to save the world's poorest, the ones who live on less than a couple of bucks a day. But do you know how many of them there are? 2.8 billion. If I had a nickel for every one of them ... well, I'd be well on my way to *Forbes'* list. But billionaires? Not even 500 left in the world!

Some of you have helped in the past—you voted for Dubya, you buy every new version of Windows, you fill your SUV with premium. Some of you may even, God help you, shop at Wal-Mart. But this is not enough—we need your help now if we're to avoid this shattering blow to the earth's biodiversity.

Your contribution of \$1, \$5 or \$10 million will go directly to a needy nine-figure net-worther who just missed *Forbes'* cut this year. Or you can give directly to the "Billion Dollar Baby" Propagation Fund. Your contribution will be used to help buy Viagra for aging billionaires, and to help bachelor billionaires find suitable companions—a key need since there are only 35 females of the species. Propagation works: Sam Walton's widow and children are worth a combined \$100 billion, and account for five of the top 10 billionaires!



To make saving the world's rich more rewarding, we also invite you to participate in our Adopt-a-Billionaire program to get e-mail updates of your chosen billionaire's progress. While you're at it, do be sure to check out their photo gallery of bachelor billionaires, or play their "Who Wants to Marry a Billionaire" game. Who knows? Maybe next year we'll see you in *Forbes*.

Sincerely,

Esophagus Brittle III, Director
World Wealthholder Fund

P.S. Please accept our gift of personalized address labels featuring photos of such borderline billionaires as William Randolph Hearst III, Donald Trump and Leona Helmsley, a constant reminder of the poorest of the richest!